

# Children's Places

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## A literature review

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# Part 1: Children and Space

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*“Every society needs a barefoot Socrates to ask childishly simple (and childishly difficult) questions, to force its members to re-examine what they have been thoughtlessly taking for granted” (Gareth B. Mathews).*

*“Space is not a scientific object removed from ideology and politics; it has always been political and strategic. If space has an air of neutrality and indifference with regard to its contents and thus seems to be ‘purely’ formal, the epitome of rational abstraction, it is precisely because it had been occupied and used, and has already been the focus of passed processes whose traces are not always evident on the landscape. Space has been shaped and molded from historical and natural elements, but this has been a political process. Space is political and ideological” (Henri Lefebvre 1976: 31).*

## 1 Theoretical introduction

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### 1.1 Philosophical considerations of space

In the opening section of a review of children in relation to space and place, I will begin by outlining some conceptions of spatiality as explored by various philosophers and anthropologists. Although their approaches to questions of space are not necessarily articulated in relation to children, their ideas enable us to think in diverse ways about children's exchanges with, investments and immersion within space. In line with some of their ideas, I try to examine not only how social spaces are constructed for and by children in literal ways within a topographical or built environment, but how spaces are imagined, claimed, lived and inhabited.

Christopher Tilley (1994. See also Feld and Basso 1996, Bachalard 1964, Heidegger 1971, Harvey 1989, Soja 1989, Foucault 1970, 1979, 1986) encompasses an approach to spaces that is divorced from its consideration as a universal dimension abstracted from human affairs. He discounts conceptions of flattened, geometric and atemporal space. Drawing on Michel Foucault, he observes that whereas time has been a rich and multifaceted strand within social and historical analyses, space and the way it both shapes and is shaped by people who inhabit it has been neglected.

Foucault's precise invitation to us to consider the importance of space is expressed as a provocation:

*Did it start with Bergson or before? Space was created as the dead, the fixed, the undialectical, the immobile. Time on the contrary was richness, fecundity, life, dialectic. (Foucault 1980:70).*

Tilley (1994: 8), in distinguishing distanced, 'scientific' conceptions of space from lived spatiality draws up a set of oppositions to bring out the qualities of 'humanised' space. Apart from repudiating a notion of atemporal space, as mentioned above, he contrasts the notion of space as a surface, to that of a medium; the idea of a coherent, uniform dimension, to one in which contradictions and multiplicities reside. He writes that to 'regard space as a surface for action is to decentre space from agency and meaning', and from the ways in which events and human activities render space meaningful.

Michel de Certeau (1988: 117), upon whose work Tilley draws in formulating his own ideas, wrote of the multiplicitous ways individuals walk and claim a city-scape, and their personalisation of space through the creation of spatial narratives, or stories. He, too, draws the distinction between place and space and between planned and administered space, on the one hand, and the ways in which space is occupied and given meaning by people, on the other. In the context of South Africa, administered space under apartheid for the majority of the population constituted a dystopia where the state sought to isolate, control and cordon-off people of colour in township ghettos and in rural 'homelands'. Such spaces were deliberately deprived of resources, and highly uniform in their construction.

De Certeau's exploration of the effects of walking the city is reminiscent of Walter Benjamin's *flaneur* (1989: 9) who perfects the art of getting lost within the labyrinth of the city. He extols the capacity to wander without a particular aim suggesting that wandering opens the individual to expanded experience and is not unlike how children playing in the streets of a city may come to discover something new. Achille Mbembe (2001), one of the most important philosophical thinkers in South Africa today, has suggested that in the context of some postcolonial situations, where journeying can never be completely satisfying or sustaining, or indeed necessarily safe, wandering takes on a 'demonic' restlessness. This is because the *flaneur* is propelled into, or possessed by various forms of migration between rural and urban areas, within countries and across their borders, across spaces in which death and threats to life are imminent. In South Africa, the majority of the population, including children, are involved in oscillating migratory journeys between rural and urban spaces, journeys in the pursuit of livelihoods, care, schooling, healing, companionship, and rituals of significance.

Returning to the work of Michel de Certeau, he writes that the rules of place lay out elements making up a location, and are laid out “beside one another” in “relationships of coexistence”, each occupying a prescribed position that together constitute a configuration of positions, a coherent topography, a certain stability. In contrast, space is a “*practiced place*” made up of the variables of direction, velocity and time. The spatial comprises “intersections of mobile elements” and heterogeneity. De Certeau draws attention to the phenomenologist, Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s (1962: 324-44) distinction between “geometrical” and “anthropological space”. For Merleau-Ponty, anthropological space implies the existential ways in which space is lived. Being, or existence, is spatial in that it is indissociable from a relationship with a milieu. It therefore charts the mediation between people and the environments in which they live that indicates the directionality of existence, creating the possibility of a multiplicity of spatial experiences.

De Certeau points to what he calls the scopic, or ‘birds-eye view’ vision of the urban planners or architects, who has a totalising view of the city laid out in the form of mapped grids. Their vision constitutes an appropriation from above, a way of mapping or staging information that creates the fiction of knowledge. Yet the administrative vision of planners and architects is removed from practices through which the city is inhabited and traversed. De Certeau, like Merleau-Ponty is concerned with the poetic experience of space, with the migrational, or metaphorical city in which actual routes individuals take are intertwined with personal histories and with the imaginary (ibid: 93).

Central to de Certeau’s consideration of space, in its opposing formulations, is its comparison with text and speech. The structural, totalizing aspects of language, a set of grammatical rules, for example, may be compared with flattened, uniform and administered, or planned space. The ways in which individuals wander through such space are likened by him to pedestrian speech acts. The act of walking is therefore a process of appropriation of the topographical system on the part of the pedestrian (ibid: 99). Styles of speech through which language is made personal and shattered through creative appropriation and wit may be likened to styles of walking the city, with its digressions and pauses. The notion of a style of walking a city may be extended to styles of occupation that children and young people may use in claiming urban, or rural spaces for their own.

De Certeau refers eloquently to the importance of remembrance within space, how habitual trajectories, or ways of traversing space render it meaningful, in that the histories of spatial occupation become reinvoked in the act of traversing space in the present, histories and objects within space that may have ceased to exist. In other words, spatial stories emerge for the individual in which current meaning evokes layers of past

spatial experience. This 'haunting' of present occupation of space by the past suggests that "the places people live in are like the presences of diverse absences". What can be seen designates what is no longer there. 'There is no place that is not haunted by many different spirits hidden there in silence, spirits one can invoke or not. Haunted places are the only places people can live in (ibid: 108).'

De Certeau speaks of the stylistic metamorphosis of space by giving a cogent example referring to children's occupation of a particular space and place. He refers to a medical institute in which retarded children live and describes it as a rigid and contrived territory in which, nevertheless, children find a place to play and dance their 'spatial stories' transforming its forbidding atmosphere into something more humane and giving. This is accomplished through the children's spontaneous and self-initiated dances, improvisations and movements (ibid: 110).

## **1.2 Space, time and phenomenology: Children's embodied occupation and attribution of meaning to spaces**

*If space allows movement, place is pause (Taun 1977:6).*

I now move on to a description of Gilles Deleuze's (1997) exploration of children's creation of spatiality through their journeys within environments. In a reinterpretation of Freud's (1909) discussion of one of his patients, Little Hans, Deleuze emphasizes a child's exploration of a milieu, an exploration that is undertaken through 'dynamic trajectories' through a milieu. Accordingly he writes:

A milieu is made up of qualities, substances, powers, and events: the street, for example, with its materials..., its noises..., its animals... or its dramas ... (Deleuze, 1997: 61).

Deleuze is insistent that journeys, or trajectories through milieus, involve the mediation between what is encountered in the real world and the imaginary appropriation of that encounter. He writes:

A real voyage, by itself, lacks the force necessary to be reflected in the imagination; the imaginary voyage, by itself, does not have the force, as Proust says, to be verified in the real. This is why the imaginary and the real must be rather, like two juxtaposed or superimposed parts of a single trajectory, two faces that ceaselessly interchange with one another, a mobile mirror...At the limit, the imaginary is a virtual image that is interfused with the real object, and vice versa (ibid: 62-3).

In a paper I wrote, entitled, Mapping Journeys through Landscape, (Henderson: 2007) I took up Deleuze's ideas in relation to a South African rural child's knowledge and depiction of a journey through the natural environment surrounding his rural home in pursuit of stolen cattle. The way I wrote the story of his journey incorporated many of

the theoretical points mentioned above in relation to human occupation of, and attribution of meaning to, lived or practiced space. The paper also brought to the attention of readers children's skills learnt in traversing space and in deploying its resources.

The paper was based on ethnographical research from March, 2003, until July, 2005 with 34 young people - thirteen boys and 21 girls between the ages of twelve and 21. The young people lived in scattered homesteads on the hills and mountain reaches overlooking a wide river-valley in South Africa. Each had lost one or both parents through death, mostly to HIV/AIDS. Children's phenomenological immersion within the exquisitely beautiful natural environment in which they lived, was fore-grounded, an environment through which they journeyed that sustained and inspired them, and at times threatened them, because of the manifest power of its forces of nature. Through ongoing, habituated bodily practice and through the investment of meaning and presence within the natural world, a sense of place existed for many, even in the face of mourning. The paper is then an account of the ways in which a relationship with the natural world may be sustaining. Whilst, acknowledging the harshness of many aspects of children's everyday lives, I sought to offset the stereotypical ways in which "AIDS orphans" were thought to bear a condition of overarching lack. In particular, I explored drawn depictions of journeying beyond the spaces of home and school in which work, autonomy, skill, imagination, and danger were conjoined.

Within this review, I have tried to name various spaces children occupy, inform and shape. The spaces I describe are certainly not the only ones that may be considered, yet they have taken on salience within the context of sub-Saharan Africa and South Africa in particular. These are necessarily spaces infused with the social. Within them, the material environment, social relations and their histories, and the imaginary are conjoined. For heuristic purposes I will briefly consider children and young people in relation to the following spaces:

- public and private space
- political space
- creative space
- and ambivalent and pathologised space.

Part 2 of this review will cover other aspects of spatiality in relation to poverty and the built environment.



## **2 Children and young people's varied specialities**

### **2.1 Children's occupation of private and public space**

An ideology of protection seeks to confine children to certain spaces, invisible within the home, or the school, within cordoned off spaces. When young people are invited to participate in public spaces, it is often at the invitation of adults who stage and control their entry into a situation where parameters have already been set. Children's formal inclusion in public space is often a form of tokenism, linked to adult concerns in seeking legitimacy for given projects through the parading of 'authentic' children's 'voices'. What is it about the figure of the child to which adults appeal to legitimate their endeavors? The most stringent critique of gesturing towards children's contribution to public processes, as a form of legitimization, lies in what is left out of view. In gesturing towards the inclusion of children, adult society congratulates itself at having considered social vulnerabilities, in so far as they adhere to children, but not in so far as they adhere to the broader society - vulnerabilities that are linked to structural inequalities, consequent upon a capitalist neo-liberal global order that has had devastating effects on the livelihoods and health, not only of children, but entire communities. Exclusive focus on the child, in this case, has to do with a nostalgic projection onto the figure of the child what adults consider themselves to have lost, but leaves unquestioned the dominant and discriminatory structural arrangements of society.

The drive to place children within protected spaces, or to keep them out of certain spaces concerns the stereotypes with which children are viewed involving tropes of childhood innocence and its opposite (for an exploration of the tropes of childhood innocent and evil see Warner, 1994). Adult fears adhering to children often have to do with their ambivalence towards their unsupervised occupation of spaces. Stigmas concerning the feral child, the 'unsocialised child', often pertain to popular and media descriptions of children who live on, or in streets where negative views of street children emerge from a fear of the young, seemingly living beyond adult influence, supervision and socialization. More nuanced understandings of children living on the streets are found in the work of Rachel Bray (?), Tobias Hecht (1998) and J.C. Kovats-Bernat (2006) showing how many still retain relationships with kin, how their work on streets often contributes significantly to the livelihood of their families, and how their relationships with one another are not unequivocally transitory, chaotic, anarchic and brutal, as is often imagined, but include gestures of generosity, tenderness and mutual-assistance (See, for example, Mizzen and Ofosu-Kusi, forthcoming).

Despite the ways in which young people and children occupy public spaces, for example, streets as places in which to play, along which to experience the world, and on which to travel on errands and to school, certain forms of young people's occupation of public spaces become threatening for adults, or unsettle the ways in which adults in authority occupy and take for granted their control of the built environment. Skate boarding culture, Hip Hop dueling word fests and graffiti art mark contemporary and globalizing ways in which young people have tried to move swiftly and without being pinned down through public space. In such ways, young people utilize public infrastructure - the built environment - with daring skill and panache. They have appropriated urban space in ways that are ephemeral and playful, and that have not been envisaged by architects and urban planners. Because such activities are seen to be dangerous for both the young people concerned, and for other pedestrians, such activities have often been outlawed by municipalities. The fact that young people leave written signatures on the outside walls of buildings, under bridges and along railway lines as visible traces of their trajectories through environments, is not appreciated by owners and many adults, and is often regarded as a form of defacement. That such images mark marginal spaces suggests the liminal space that young people, particularly teenagers occupy within social hierarchies.

Within the context of many African cities, Filip De Boeck and Alcinda Honwana (2005: 1), drawing on Mamdou Diouf, have noted how children and young people have the capacity to fracture public space, to reinvent or even bypass it. This is because of the important ways children are involved in civil-war, religious movements, popular culture, performance genres, sexuality and economic activities.

## **2.2 Political space**

I take South Africa as an example of the ways in which young people were seminal in political processes in transforming a society. I explore briefly how their contributions have been eulogised and pathologised, noting how very few serious attempts have been made to describe with accuracy the contributions and challenges of the young. In doing so, I briefly consider the social space occupied by young people in South Africa from a time of mounting struggle against apartheid to the subsequent ways in which children and childhood have been configured within the bounds of the democratic state. Ironically, despite a progressive constitution in which children's rights, including the right to contribute to the formulation of social policy are enshrined, the overtly public, political social space children occupy has diminished, as has society's notion of their 'proper place'.

In the 1980s in South Africa, during desperate conflagrations with the apartheid state - a period in which many social assumptions about place, generational identities and capacities were questioned - African children and youth emerged as prominent agents of

change. They refused the apartheid state's educational policies that afforded them mediocre education. They boycotted state institutions, as well as retail establishments seen to be predominantly in the hands of white capital. There was a confrontation in which young people took on weighty concerns, some of which have been carefully and sympathetically etched in the ethnographic work of Pamela Reynolds (1995a, 1995b, 2000) and Fiona Ross (2003. See also Straker 1992, Seekings 1993). I list young male leaders' concerns, young men with whom Reynolds sought to describe their lives as young activists, some of whom, from a young age, had spent up to fifteen years actively opposing to the state. Their concerns were:

- how to protect one's family from the brutality of the state given one's own political involvement
- how to come to a considered understanding of the qualities of leadership
- how to take up responsible mediation between the state and one's own community
- how to carry often painful secrets and knowledge; how to deal with betrayal, even at times with equanimity
- how to attempt to prepare oneself for torture
- how to shield one's family from one's own excruciating experiences of torture and, for some
- how to make plans to escape the country in order to join the armed struggle
- how to reconstitute community life after having returned from exile, or from imprisonment, in an everyday world within a small town where it was neither unusual to encounter the men who had tortured one, nor individuals who had betrayed one
- and lastly, how to come to terms with the abiding inequalities and pressures of material consumption within South Africa.<sup>1</sup>

During the 1980s, children and young people, irrespective of the degree of their political involvement, were met with the uncompromising might of the state. The extent to which even very young children were shot, beaten and taken up into detention is an indictment of a racialised society in which the childhoods of a white minority were deemed worthy of 'protection' and those of the African majority were regarded as occupying a place of exception where acceptable standards of conduct could be abandoned.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> For other writing referring to children and youths' contribution to the transformation of South African society during the struggle against apartheid see, Bundy (1994), Hyslop (1988), Carter (1991), Naidoo (1992), Ndebele (1995), Badat (1997), and Marks (2001).

<sup>2</sup> For the ways in which sovereignty is threaded through with violence reaching beyond the bounds of its own legitimation, see, for example, Agumben (1995).

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) set up after the first national democratic elections in 1994 - a body that among other things sought to provide a record of gross human violations of individuals and of deaths and disappearances during the apartheid regime - failed in many respects to adequately document the often protracted and responsible involvement of young people in transforming society, as well as the extent of the torture they endured and the sacrifices they made in confrontations with the state.

Within the parameters of the new society, media began to emphasise the importance of the reconstitution of 'normal' childhood, a return to a cordoned space of innocence (Ndebele, 1995), and called for the 'moral regeneration' of its citizenry. It was a call beneath which lay discomfort at the extent of children's active involvement in the transformation of the society, and through the latter process, of the violence to which they had necessarily been exposed and in which they had sometimes taken part. Fears came to focus on young people themselves rather than on the treatment they had received under the former regime. Young people were now pathologised as a problem for the new society and labelled 'the lost generation', because some had sacrificed their education in order to bring about social change, and it was widely thought that their exposure to violence would necessarily lead to their own indiscriminate perpetuation of violence within the society.

Appeals for the restoration of the normative diminished the social space in which young people could publicly make a contribution to the issues of the day, despite the fact that for the first time in South Africa's history a democratic state was emerging. The restoration of 'the normative' was concerned with reinsertion of 'appropriate' social hierarchies in which men, women and children resumed their 'accepted' places, in particular, the return of children to a space of 'safety' in which their dependency was emphasised and in which they were infantilised. Prior to the 1994 elections, it was briefly mooted that children of fourteen years and upward be entitled to vote in national elections in acknowledgement of their contribution to the transformation of the society. It was an idea quickly quashed to align the new nation state with international definitions of childhood correlated to age. A real return to childhood would be to recognise the power of children in shaping the world and in taking seriously the call to attend to their transgressions and the critique of dominant society that they provide. As Chris Jenks (1996) has written, children are both destined and required to transgress in ways that test society, as well as social theory. This is so because children submit to the violence of the existing social-historical order without having been pre-warned.

As Bray *et al* (2009) have noted, in contemporary South Africa, a welfarist approach to service delivery for the young is dominant, despite the fact that at the level of the state policy has embraced notions of developmental social welfare (Department of

Welfare, 1997). Within welfarist frameworks neither children, nor adolescents, and indeed poor adults are ordinarily viewed as eligible or valuable contributors to processes of policy and program design. Thus, the exclusion of the young in more formalised arena needs to be questioned in the context of broader notions of citizenship in post-apartheid South Africa. The forces that constrain opportunities for the young to speak and to be heard, are often those that operate to exclude women and the poor.

A small but rich ethnographic record of childhoods just prior to, and following the new political dispensation, points clearly to the multiple ways in which young children and adolescents contribute to care, economic stability and cultural generation in the home and neighbourhood (See Bray, 2003; Henderson, 1999, 2006, forthcoming; Jones, 1993; Moses, 2006; Ramphele, 2002; Reynolds, 1989, 1995; Ross, 1995, 2003; Salo, 2003, 2004; Bray *et al*, forthcoming).

### 2.3 Creative space

One of the few studies on children's creativity and one that continues to be of importance is Iona and Peter Opie's work of children's genres of performance, song, games in the streets of many British towns (Opie and Opie, 1959). Their work points to the lively ways children have inhabited public spaces. I draw on a variety of children's creative repertoires and creative participatory research methodologies to explore spatiality. In doing so, I briefly refer to:

- Creative pedagogies through the work of Pippa Stein (2007) and Denise Newfield with Robert Manyedzo (2006) in meeting the challenges of multi-lingual teaching contexts in South Africa.
- Children's use of photography in documenting and reflecting upon their lived environment on the streets of Accra, Ghana (Mizen and Ofusu-Kusi, forthcoming).
- The use of improvisation and drama as a means of exploring children's reflections on local worlds (Henderson, 2006).
- A series of radio programmes produced by children in KwaZulu-Natal concerning the social context of HIV/AIDS (Henderson, forthcoming).
- Creative work undertaken with refugee children in Johannesburg (Clacherty and Welvering 2006).
- And the performance genre of *isicathamiya* in KwaZulu-Natal where young people explore contemporary issues in song (Gunner, 2003, 2006).

I draw on the above examples to suggest ways in which adults and children interact with one another to reflect on the environments they have created and occupy. In lastly referring to a genre of performance young people have initiated for themselves and in which they are passionately involved, I show the ways in which children comment on

social realities in poignant and astute ways. It is such creative genres that offer, through their reach into public space via staged performance and radio, a powerful means for young people to be 'heard', in which their interest in the intertwining of global and local realities, and their confirmation and questioning of normative parameters and experiences of dislocation become manifest.

### **2.3.1 *Creative pedagogies***

The late Pippa Stein and Denise Newfield of the University of the Witwatersrand have been involved for many years in researching and teaching multi-modal forms of pedagogy in English studies within often multi-lingual classrooms in South Africa. Their work touches on democratic forms of education that work against deficit models of the child and their educational status. Within such pedagogies, pupils are encouraged to explore and to share aspects of their everyday and varied circumstances and experience in ways that draw on their existing capacities and genres of representation. In classrooms where pupils may arrive with different skills in terms of writing, oral and dramatic capabilities, skills in singing and story-telling - differences that have socio-cultural and economic dimensions - teachers are encouraged to draw on children's local forms of knowledge and individual strengths in creating a forum for exchange and mutual stimulation. Not only have such textured ways of involving children resulted in positive educational outcomes, but they have fostered excitement in relation to learning where there had often previously been disinterest, disengagement and alienation. The development of such approaches to education in South Africa is a supremely urgent task, given the deliberately discriminatory and unequal forms of education promulgated by the apartheid state and continuing extremely poor standards of education. Stein and Newfield, among other colleagues in the field of linguistics and language studies, through their deployment of creative teaching methodologies, and through drawing on the often submerged capacities of pupils, have developed what might be called participatory and democratic forms of educational process that build respect and excitement within contexts of diversity.

Before she died, Stein (2007) published a book, *Multimodal Pedagogies in Diverse Classrooms: Representation, Rights and Resources*. It is a record of her most important work and examines how classrooms can become a democratic space founded on the integration of different histories, modes of representation, feeling, languages and discourses and in which individuals are jolted out of their complacencies through pedagogical experiences that cross social, racial, cultural environmental and knowledge divides within South African society.

### 2.3.2 *Children's photography in Accra*

Phillip Mizen and Yaw Ofusu-Kusi (forthcoming: 2, 2008, 2006) have described a photographic project carried out by children living and working on the streets of Accra, Ghana. By taking seriously the idea of children as “the agents of their own enquiry”, they sought to develop “collaborative and complementary research practices” with the children. Their aim was to acknowledge young people’s “agency and purpose in looking to survive under circumstances not of their making, to highlight [children’s] fortitude and creativity, to understand the knowledge and meanings they possess[ed], and how they act[ed] upon these understandings”. To this end, children developed photographic accounts of a day spent living and working on the streets. Mizen and Ofusu-Kusi argued for the importance of “deftness and innovation of method” in order to take seriously the views and explanations of children as ‘a source of unofficial truth’ (*ibid.* 3). In introducing the photographs, Mizen and Ofusu-Kusi have written that they ‘told vividly of the environs and ecology of street life, its detail and design, fractures and strains, its palpable fragmentation’ and that they shared the ‘physical fabric and infrastructure under stress [of Accra], and a burgeoning informal economy within and through which the children [had to] work to survive (*ibid.* 5)’.

Patterns and themes, as well as repertoires of activities emerged in examining the photographs: boys pushing and carrying heavy loads through street markets, girls carrying smaller items, cooking food for sale and cleaning utensils, the display of various, merchandise young people sold. Mizen and Ofusu-Kusi mention the importance of details within the young people’s photographs and, in particular, objects that gave a topographical dimension to a description of their lives, details that would often otherwise be missed (*ibid.* 7).

Importantly, the photographs confirmed narratives the children told about their lives, but also depicted more private and personal moments that are often inaccessible to researchers. The photographs had a strong humanising effect on perceptions of street children, because they revealed certain intimacies that overturned stereotypical conceptions of street life. They revealed the errors of type-casting street children as, for example, dirty, feral, violent, and of necessity undergoing unending hardship. Mizen and Ofusu-Kusi were struck by the way the photographs underscored the fallibility of their existing knowledge through taking them by surprise (*ibid.* 15). Images revealed children in humorous situations displaying palpable enjoyment, posturing for the camera, and in relation to one another, compassion, tenderness and friendship (*ibid.* 9). Many of these qualities constituted ‘previously unobserved or unknown dimensions’ of the children’s lives. To reiterate the activities the photographs displayed, in addition to depicting aspects of children’s working day and the built environment through which they wandered in their quest for a living, they contained sets of more intimate images. A

large proportion of the photographs had to do with sleeping and eating, showing the importance of these activities for the children. It was particularly the photographs of intimacy and conviviality, of sleeping in protective groups, of creating inventive tents out of discarded bags that separated sleepers from the street, of children gathering together in groups to share food, to pass food to one another, or, to share a common plate from which they ate, to shower together in a public shower, that bore out broader forms of sociality. The contours of the creation of sociality demonstrated care, friendship and acts of generosity.

Having considered the photographs, Mizen and Ofusu-Kusi concluded that: “Instead of a Hobbesian nightmare of childhoods overflowing with cruelty, resentment and rage, where in the street boys tended to be highly individualistic (Hecht 1998:45), fiercely competitive and violently opportunistic”, a more open and cooperative culture was evident among the street children. The photographs provided “visual evidence of a culture distinguished, as much by friendship as by violence”. They showed how small groups of children made and remade friendships in which considerations of reciprocity and mutual support were a significant feature.

Theoretically, Mizen and Ofusu-Kusi explore what lies beyond the limits of the photograph, bringing forward the act of photography as the point where children's agency emerges. Photography does not entail transparent depictions, or reproductions of a ‘natural’ world and its empirical dimensions. Rather its practise necessitates a degree of self-consciousness through which children draw on their experience of the world and in which they are required “to isolate, select, discern and frame” what it is they wish to convey. The taking of a photograph, therefore, includes a process of journeying through an environment, much as Deleuze claimed; the selection and conceptualisation of what aspects are to be portrayed; cognisance of meanings to be attributed to what has been selected; and the practical act of taking the photograph. These are a complex and satisfying set of involvements and mediations with the world out of which both self, meanings and the imaginary are enhanced.

### ***2.3.3 Imidlalo Yethu: young people's creation of a play***

From March, 2003, to the end of 2008, I was involved in conducting and writing up ethnographic research based in Okhahlamba, a rural sub-district within KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. My purpose was to explore the experience of people living with and alongside HIV/AIDS. During the course of my work I met regularly with a group of young people in the community of Emfuleni.<sup>3</sup> The young people I came to know ranged in age between fourteen and 21 years, each having lost one or both parents through

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<sup>3</sup> Note that this is not the real name of the community. I have invented a name to protect the identities of the young people whom I came to know.



death. In addition to visiting them in their homesteads, I met with them after school at the secondary school most of them attended. They were part of an interventionist programme run by a local non-governmental organization that involved raising chickens and garden produce for sale and consumption. On first being introduced to the children by a young woman, Zanele Mchunu, the facilitator of the intervention programme, the young people seemed extremely shy, and although they were obviously close to Zanele, answered her questions in a truncated manner. I was soon to learn that their muted response had to do with pronounced repertoires of avoidance connoting respect in Okhahlamba that marked interactions between people of differing ages. I introduced a set of theatre games into the meetings with the group, and before long younger children became more overtly expressive.

In addition to ongoing ethnographic research in which I interviewed and visited the children in their homes, Zanele and I accompanied the young people on a week-long workshop away from their homes where I facilitated a process in which the group produced a play depicting aspects of life in the broader community in which they lived. As an entry point, I asked them to list areas of difficulty in their community, as well as the kinds of people who attempted to deal with such difficulties. Once sets of themes and potential characters had been identified, I divided the group into smaller groups who then worked on scenes through improvisation around a cluster of themes. After the smaller groups had developed a scenario on their own, they convened with the other groups and performed for one another. Children chose the scenarios they thought the best from the set of improvisations. My role was to assist in 'tightening' the performance, in teaching the children techniques of enhancing the dramatic impact of what they had produced. Threaded through the performance were dance and songs drawing on local performance repertoires with which the children were particularly familiar and in which they excelled.

In the opening scene of their play, *Imidlalo Yethu* (Our Play), two young girls, taking on the parts of two sisters whose parents have died of HIV/AIDS, displayed a greater familiarity than their grandparents with the latest developments in social services. They explained to their grandparents that a new Child Support Grant to be supplied by the government had been announced at school, and that they as *izintandane* (orphans) were entitled to it.<sup>4</sup> They were also aware of the often exasperating dealings with government departments in pursuit of such services. In the scene, they specifically 'taught' those acting the parts of grandparents about the niceties of social grant applications. Social grants, in particular the Child Support Grant (see below), has been widely taken up throughout South Africa due to extreme poverty and decreasing waged employment in

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<sup>4</sup> The Child Support Grant is a relatively easily obtained social grant for children up to the age of fifteen years. In terms of the law, the current caregiver must apply for the grant on behalf of the child. The grant is a monthly payment of R240 in 2009.

the formal economy. Returning to the opening scene of the play and its progression, the children acting the part of the sisters, 'accompanied' their grandparents to the local town in a crowded taxi in which passengers spoke of the latest cattle thefts and of deaths due to HIV/AIDS.

On arrival in the town, the young people and their grandparents made their way through a crowd selling fruit, vegetables and herbal medicines, eventually arriving at a Home Affairs office where the children helped their grandparents to reapply for their identity documents. The children displayed much wit in depicting the Home Affairs official working at his computer, as well as a charming disingenuousness on the part of grandparents who, in the play, had received no formal education, unlike their grandchildren. In the play, the old people explain to the official that their documents have been destroyed in a fire that burnt their house down, a common occurrence in the high mountains where the children lived and where each year lightening claims several lives and destroys people's homes.

The two young people who acted the parts of the granddaughters declared openly that they were *izintandane* (orphans), and that their parents had died of the effects of *igciwane*, the Human Immuno-deficiency Virus. This was unusual in that in real life the children and young people refused being labeled orphans and called themselves, "The Leaders of Tomorrow". They were reluctant to take on the identity of orphans in everyday life, because in local conceptualizations, the state of orphanhood implied radical social dislocation, a state of complete marginalization and lack of social place - something the children insisted did not describe their lives. Most lived with members of their extended families and often with grandparents, and a few lived with neighbours. They all remained in the environment in which they had grown up and which, despite their parent/s death/s, had not been completely divested of meaning for them, or social place.<sup>5</sup>

The play went on to contain scenes about an old man being robbed of his earnings at an automatic teller machine and the local response of older men who pursued the thieves and subjected them to community justice, a severe beating. Interestingly enough, the body of men dealing with criminals in Emfuleni were given the name "*amaScorpions*" by the youth. Nationally, The Scorpions were an elite crime unit that investigated corruption within South Africa broadly, including within government circles. The unit received widespread support from the public, but was subsequently disbanded by the state, as too many officials were being investigated for corruption, and increasingly fractious political interests led to its demise. Other scenes in the play had to do with traditional healers and diviners lamenting the widespread death in Emfuleni due

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<sup>5</sup> See Helen Meintjes (2006) and Patricia Henderson (2006) for a more in depth analysis of local philosophical descriptions of the state of orphanhood.

to the virus (*igciwane*) and referred to their practice in attempting to deal with the disease, as well as to locate cattle thieves and stolen cattle through divinatory powers, cattle-theft being an ongoing problem in the mountainous region in which the children lived. Such losses were heavily borne by families who had invested their hard-won earnings in the accumulation of cattle herds over time.

The last scene in the play depicted a church service of the Apostolic Church of Zion. In it, the young people perfectly reproduced the mannerisms of such congregations and a prophet (*umphrofethi*) who appealed to God to assist his followers in the time of the Mighty Destroyer (*Mashaya Bhuye*), one of the evocative names given to HIV/AIDS in isiZulu. A desire to transcend the harshness of everyday life was conveyed in the scene through the relief that powerful, collective singing, dancing and prayer can effect.

There are two points I would like to make in reflecting on the play the young people created as a particular social space they engendered. The first has to do with enactment as an important distancing device through which they were able to describe painful aspects of life without approaching too closely personal experiences of pain. The fact that young people themselves brought up HIV/AIDS as a theme threading through their play, suggests that in acting out parts they could point to areas of pain without discomposing themselves in the company of their peers.

The second point I wish to make revolves around the presumed accessibility of children's voices. Habitual ways in which embodied forms of respect were re-enacted in a community like Emfuleni rather persuaded me of the difficulties of accessing free-floating and self-reflexive voices of children. In Emfuleni children's experimental, playful and critical voices were often located in unusual social spaces, for example, in the creation of the play. They, too, erupted spontaneously in the spaces of children's everyday work and play, including the practice of local performance genres revolving around dance and song. Similar spaces emerged between researchers and children after they had travelled an extended journey together over time where habitual forms of interaction were suspended, and where experimental openness was achieved through mounting trust and mutual curiosity.

#### **2.3.4 *Refugee children's suitcase stories***

The Suitcase project, initiated in 2001 by researcher, Glynis Clacherty in conjunction with Diane Welvering, an artist, was envisaged as art therapy, offering psycho-social support for refugee children under eighteen years old, who had found their way to the Jesuit Refugee Services in Hillbrow, Johannesburg, South Africa from several other African countries. The young people concerned had been separated from relatives in their flight from different countries and ended up in South Africa as "unaccompanied child refugees". Their countries of origin were the Democratic Republic of the Congo,

Burundi, Rwanda, Ethiopia, and Angola, although some of them had stayed for protracted periods in other countries before coming to South Africa. Clacherty recounted how the children had negative experiences of conventional counselling and were reluctant to recall their past experiences. She had the inspiration that suitcases as objects decorated by individual children could symbolically represent a simultaneous collage of current and former aspects of children's selves and experience in ways that could point to survival, memory and current challenges about which they could choose to speak or to remain silent. She writes:

A suitcase is about a journey; all the children had taken journeys. A suitcase also has a face that is open to everyone to see, and a hidden space inside that we can choose to explore or not. Would suitcases help some of the children to reclaim the memories, both difficult and happy, that they were now choosing to hide (*ibid*: 20)?

The young people met regularly with Clacherty and Welvering and began a process of decorating the outside of their suitcases with images of their current lives and with the free application of paint, beads and ribbons, and then creating sets of images that recalled aspects of their past to paste within the interiors. A space was provided in which children could form relationships with one another and with the researchers. When and if children wanted to approach Clacherty with some of 'their stories', they could do so collectively, or privately under a tree in the courtyard of the venue where they met regularly.

The children entered into an unfolding process of creating images with which to transform their suitcases into personal reliquaries, ritual objects in which points of pain and beauty in their past lives, and their severance from all that had been familiar, were equally marked. Aspects of their current lives and unfolding identities were also explored. The weight of pain is tangible within children's narratives, as reported by Clacherty, and in the juxtaposition of images fixed to the surfaces of the cases. There is an overwhelming sense of loss, not only of family members through death, but the dissolution of the familiar, the mourning for often rural worlds and activities that have been obliterated; there are themes of flight - flight from immediate danger in the past and the present, flight across borders through often hostile countries; of arrival in South Africa; and of the experience of being sometimes unwelcome in a stimulating yet bewildering urban environment completely different from places that had once been home.

Among some of the children, a sense of restlessness was paramount in the suspended quest of seeking for lost relatives, the haunted nature of everyday life where severance from relatives suggested to children that, on the one hand, their relatives may have been still alive, and, on the other, possibly dead. Any surviving relatives left in the countries

from which the children had fled, or who were similarly scattered in different and unknown places - the children assumed - would also live with uncertainty as to whether their children had survived. In the inconclusive space of not knowing whether relatives were alive or dead, and if alive, whether they wondered about their children, mourning and death had no resolution, but were indefinitely extended. Everyday life became a haunted space, yet also one in which children attempted ongoing construction of their lives, a process in which memory and forgetting were intertwined.

I refer briefly to a few of the young people's narratives as they emerged in relation to the images created on the surface and in the interior of their suitcases.

Pasco, a boy of seventeen, who had moved from the DRC with his sister Aggie after the death of their mother when they were young children, drew a picture of a tree inside his suitcase. For him the tree symbolised a place for conversation, a place of stability. He called it, "the peace tree". The depiction of a generic, symbolic tree recalled the memory of the mango tree outside his home in the DRC where he and his sister would sit during the heat of the day and at night to talk. The re-evocation of this tree and its transformation into a transportable idea enabled Pasco to say that his depiction of the tree now constituted something within himself that he could take with him to any other place he would go to in the future. The tree featured alongside a drawing in which paths, birds, a river and mountains were etched together with the depiction of a house. The house had been a place where people had lived and shared as a family. They had shared together, 'mind, soul and in body' (*ibid*: 29). The house had been destroyed and Pasco thought that even if he managed to create a house in the future he could never replace the one that was lost. Even if a future house were to be constructed it would never be the same. Yet this did not mean that Pasco gave up on his dream of constructing a future house around which he would plant many trees.

Stories referring to the past, yet that intertwined with the present were accompanied by images and stories that gave shape to Pasco's current life. He noted how brutal treatment by South African police and the particular way in which they held him suspended by his belt made him feel "helpless", as if he were "nothing". He stressed the importance of his friendship with other boys, all refugees, who during their visits to him would reproduce rituals of conviviality, for example, eating porridge and soup, 'soul food' together. He stated that because he and his friends came from afar, they were able to understand one another and knew one another's modes of speech and ways of deflecting anger. They were not so skilled always at reading South African modes of speech and behaviour, a failing that could get them into trouble in the streets of Hillbrow.

One of the most poignant suitcase stories involved an eighteen-year-old boy from Rwanda called Paul. For many sessions with the other refugee children Paul was reluctant to draw any images although he was interested in the group and well liked by the other children. One day he began a process of drawing repeated images of ducks that he pasted in his diary and on the inside of his suitcase. After a long period in which he chose not to speak about what he had made with Clacherty, Paul eventually came up to her and conveyed that he was ready to speak. Paul had lived in Rwanda, and his father, a successful business man, had given him five ducks, four pigeons, six chickens and five goats to care for. This was so that Paul, through caring for the animals and birds from the time they were young, would learn how to become successful in running his own life. His father told him that if he kept on looking after the ducks he would see the meaning of it one day. The expectations of continuity and love and the formation of purpose that the gifts entailed was completely shattered by a process in which Paul had lost his parents, brother and sisters in fleeing from Rwanda when the genocide began and in walking by foot to Burundi.

Paul's uncle, in trying to shield him from attack, had had his hand chopped off with a machete. Paul's father persuaded his wife and children to flee. In fleeing, Paul watched his mother die as she was shot in the stomach. They had shortly before lost his sisters in crossing the border from Rwanda to Burundi. After his mother's death, Paul walked back with his little brother in the direction to Rwanda, hoping to find his father. An uncle met him on the way and told him that he had to turn around again and walk away from Rwanda. A message was sent to Paul's father telling him of the death of his wife. He came to join his sons, although he was an extremely ill man. On the way he was abducted and the little boys were left alone. Paul's little brother was sent to an orphanage in Kenya by a nun who told him that they only had one place for a child and that his brother had a chance of surviving if he went there. Paul then made his way to Johannesburg with an uncle. In relating his story in a halting manner, he said:

I want to keep my story separate from me now. That is part of my life but it is too much, too much (*ibid:* ).

Lawrence Langer (1997) has written on time in ways that seem pertinent in pondering the young people's narratives in the suitcase stories, as well as their suitcases' status as ritual objects in which memory and the present were in conversation with one another.

[A questionable assumption] is the premise that survivors of atrocities experience time only chronologically, so that the present appears to follow the past and precede the future. Testimony may sound chronological to an auditor or audience, but the narrator, a mental witness rather than a temporal one, is "out of time" as he or she tells the

story...[W]e are led astray or baffled by the lack of a language to confront the difference between the permanent banks of historical narrative, and durational persistence, which cannot overflow the blocked reservoir of its own moment in memory and hence never enters what we call the stream of time.

Anyone who hears these testimonies will understand that for the witnesses' time is durational as well as chronological, and that durational time is experienced continuously, not sequentially as a memory from which one can be liberated (*ibid*: 55).

With Clacherty and the young refugees in Johannesburg, Paul went on a small retreat and lit a candle for each of his relatives who had died. He also lit one for his ten-year-old self who had "walked and walked and lost everyone". He cut out pair after pair of shoes from magazines to stick on his suitcase, because they reminded him of the distance he had come, that he had "walked and walked and survived".

Clacherty and Welvering's work facilitated a social space over time of great importance among the young people concerned, one in which they could gather and sift through their difficult memories in ways that were life enhancing.

### **2.3.5 *Children's radio diaries in a time of HIV/AIDS***

*Abaqophi bas' Okhayeni Abaqinile*, the strong recorders of Okhayeni (2007), is a group of children between the ages of ten and fourteen, attending Okhayeni Primary School in the rural Ingwavuma District of KwaZulu-Natal. Together they are involved in an innovative radio project. The area where the children live, including KwaZulu-Natal as a whole, has one of the highest rates of HIV/AIDS infection in southern Africa and indeed the world. Many of the children involved in the radio project have lost relatives through death, including parents, brothers and sisters, uncles and aunts. The radio project is a joint initiative of the Children's Institute of the University of Cape Town, The Zisizwe Educational Trust and Okhayeni Primary School. The aim of the project is to initiate a process in which children develop the technological skills and reflexive abilities to create their own radio diaries that are broadcast on a local radio station.

Preparations for the creation of the radio diaries, involved a prolonged period of writing diaries and drawing images depicting children's concerns and everyday lives. Individual children then created story-boards out of which they developed their programmes. Generally, each programme involves a child introducing themselves, describing the place they are in and interviewing other people in their environment to create the narrative thread they wish to share with the public. The radio diaries, in capturing details of children's lives, their worries, celebrations, knowledge and observations, are extremely refreshing and work against descriptions of 'a typical' or

quintessential child living within a context of HIV/AIDS. Each child stands alone conveying specific circumstances: personality, passions, his or her ties with friends and family; the contours of personal pain and loss; curiosity in describing the passing world, for example, a description of cars in the main road; enjoyment of play, for example, the creation of clay animals, and the pride of learning how to travel on one's own for the first time in running an errand for a mother in which one learns how to buy goods, handle money and account for change.

What immediately impressed itself upon me whilst listening to the children's broadcasts was the quality, or timbre of their voices - something that cannot be conveyed within transcriptions of a speaking voice. Their confidence in interviewing their relatives, in describing their surroundings, in greeting fellow pupils at their schools, as well as the particularities of their turn of phrase was tangible.

The young people's voices conveyed tenderness in their exchanges with older people. Likewise, older people greeted and responded to children's questions with kindness, and often palpable love. A particular etiquette in relation to greeting one another and in enquiring into one another's well-being became evident in the interviews. Other themes in the unfolding narrative fragments of the children had to do, for example, with delight at the return of migrant fathers who worked in the cities far from their rural homes and who on their return often brought presents and undertook special journeys with their children; the love and support of a mother who when she heard her son was being discriminated against by a 'step-mother' returned from her work as a clothing merchant in a distant town to live with her son. The closeness of their relationship was celebrated by the boy in his descriptions. His bravery was conveyed through a throwaway line that he did not care if the woman who was supposed to care for him was neglectful, because he stilled his hunger by hunting mice and birds (a common pursuit among young rural boys in South Africa). Not only his hunting abilities, but his naming of the trees along his way for part of his journey for the radio diary, conveyed dexterity within his environment and a pleasing knowledge of its qualities and presences.

Another girl, whose aunt died, asks her mother why she was not informed about her aunt having had HIV/AIDS during the period of her demise. Her questioning points to ways in which the mother may have been ashamed of the fact that her sister was dying of HIV/AIDS, as well as to cultural predilections in which adults attempt to 'protect' children in withholding painful information from them when they are very young, including information about the fact that a parent may have died. The latter responses are aimed at shielding young children from pain, but may in fact bewilder and isolate them in their experience of pain over a parent's death. The girl's interview with her



mother concerning her aunt's death led to the mother questioning her approach in withholding information from her daughter.

Similarly, the young boy whose great love of his mother is described above, in recalling the cruelty with which the 'step mother' had treated him during his mother's absence, learns from her of her surprise that one who had been so young at the time he had experienced cruelty should have remembered it so well.

The radio diaries are an important and valuable way of getting children's voices heard in a wider context beyond their area and are especially effective given the high value placed on media and especially radio in poor communities in South Africa. The programmes also increase children's sense of their capacities and place in the world. They are an invaluable method of engaging with children in an empowering way that promotes the increasing 'visibility' of children, their wisdom and sensitivities in the public realm.

#### **2.3.6 Performing identities**

**Liz Gunner. 2006. Zulu Choral Music- Performing Identities in a New State. *Research in African Literatures*, 37 (2): 83-97. And 2003. 'Those dying generations at their Song': Youth, *isicathamiya* and Singing of Life, Death and AIDS in today's KwaZulu-Natal. *English Studies in Africa*, 46 (2): 42-53.**

Liz Gunner's work on the performance genre of *isicathamiya*, a particular genre combining dance and song, and in which many young people are involved, is an important example of the ways in which children and youth comment on topical issues that affect them. The genre, made famous by the group, Ladysmith Black Mambazo who became known to an international audience through collaborative work with the singer, Paul Simon, has a wide popularity and established visibility within the public sphere in South Africa due to all night competitions in major city centres and its exposure through Zulu-language radio programmes dedicated to the genre. Gunner's articles take up among other things themes concerning love and rejection in the face of the HIV/AIDS pandemic within the lyrics of many songs. Louise Meintjes (1990 : 69) in relation to the Paul Simon album, *Graceland* on which he collaborated with Ladysmith Black Manbaso, writes: "The discourse of politics is not a separate domain with its exclusive meanings. Neither is the musical domain. The one is embedded in the other. The political is simultaneously articulated with the musical to create a transnational flow of meaning". The importance of documenting children and youth's performance genres are precisely to show how the young have their 'fingers of the pulse' of the times. Veit Erlman (1991) has written:

"It is in the sphere of popular performance that the winds of change often blow much earlier and harder than elsewhere. It is through the prism of ... popular

performance that the contours of a humane and habitable South Africa become more clearly visible (ibid: 182)".

### **2.3.7 Conclusion**

The above examples of a few creative activities and research methods involving children and young people allude to the unfolding of social spaces in which children's critical, wry and astute observations and imitations of social realities are highlighted. Some of these methods were therapeutic in nature, creating social spaces in which children could explore difficult, painful histories and memories in safety. Such methods of engagement, whether initiated by adults in cooperation with children or by young people themselves, were 'empowering' in that they integrated creativity, observation and satisfaction: processes in and through which children could comment on realities they observed and increased their visibility and acknowledgement within public spaces in a variety of ways.

## **2.4 Marginal or pathologised space**

*de Boeck, Filip & Marie-Françoise Plissart. 2004. Kinshasa: Tales of the Invisible City. Ghent-Amsterdam: Ludion.*

It is interesting to contrast de Boeck's anthropological work in the DRC where children occupy and shape public space in often forceful ways - ways that are viewed with ambiguity and often fear - to the ways in which western, democratic states limit the independent occupation by children and young people of public space yet invite them into space that has already been circumscribed. Part of de Boeck's work together with the photographs of Marie-Françoise Plissart is an artful exploration of the city of Kinshasa, its' built environment, its' inhabitants and the ways in which they sustain social and imaginary worlds. His explanation of how people inhabit the city today concerns ruptures and breaches in young people's lives, young people who live between homes and streets. Colonization, decolonization, war and global capitalism have had their inevitable effects on Kinshasa and the DRC. The efficacy and reach of the DRC as a state, like many post-colonial states, is marked by its failure to sustain institutions and to provide meaningful services for its people. In relation to Kinshasa and the effects of such histories and economies on the built environment of the city, de Boeck and others have described a process of villagisation around a modernist city-core that was built with the inauguration of independence and the end of colonial rule. Sprawling, self-administered, informal housing areas that surround the city centre, take on the look and attributes of rural communities. Water and fuel have to be gathered from the outskirts of the city. Sanitation is improvised, urban settlements are traversed by sandy paths, and widespread food gardens are a necessity in providing food for urban dwellers. As will be seen below, de Boeck refers to the importance of the imaginary in compensating for the harsh difficulties and unpredictability of material realities. His reference to invisible

architecture is a case in point. Here, for example, people set up all sorts of services in the open, marking spaces of activity through a table, typewriter and a desk, or the stringing up of news reports on rope strung between trees. The social effects of the ruptures and breaches within young people's lives due to the processes of war, decolonization, impoverishment, illness and a compromised ability to sustain social relations over time, are explored in relation to an upsurge of witchcraft accusations aimed at often very young children in Kinshasa – children who once having been accused who are then cast out of their families and who inevitably come to live on the streets of the city (p. 158-159).

De Boeck describes, in extended and poetic ways, the alienation that Kinois experience in relation to 'the order of the visible', that is to the overt, tangible experience of everyday life in Kinshasa. He speaks to the intertwining of the imaginary with disappointing reality, noting both peoples' capacity to imagine an order of abundance and fulfillment in alignment with globalised aspirations, but also the inversion of normative ideals in relation to the idea of an invisible, malevolent order: an invisible world connected to death, spirits and bewitchment. Because of the erosion of tenable worlds in the everyday lives of Kinois, it seems that the invisible world within the imaginary of the city has made inroads into daytime reality. States of living are therefore linked with notions of death and normative inversion.

The predominance of a second world in the discourses and practices of the Kinois lead to the conclusion that local mental landscapes are no less real than their physical counterparts. In urban Congo something seems to have changed in the slippage between visible and invisible, between reality and what we call, its double, its shadow, specter, reflection, image. The seen and the unseen no longer reflect and balance one another or produce each other in equal ways. Rather, the invisible realm has come to inhabit and overgrow its opposite. Symptomatic of this more general change is the invasion of the space of the living by the dead (pp. 56-58).

In relation to witchcraft accusations aimed at children and the social crises such accusations underscore, de Boeck writes:

Children and young adolescents have never before occupied a more central position in the public spaces of urban life, whether in the popular urban music culture, the media, the churches, the army, the street, or the bed...The newly generated central but ambivalent, societal status of children seems to have crystallized most clearly around the figure of the witch, which is the materialization of a cultural imaginary of crisis on the intersection among, for example, money; power, kinship and sexuality (159-60).

Children are therefore increasingly being accused of causing misfortune in their neighbourhoods, families and broader environments. For example, De Boeck points to

the ways in which children have been accused of causing individual deaths, ill-health and HIV/AIDS, the break-up of marriages, and impotence.

One of the ways in which children may be incorporated into society again is through 'confession' within charismatic churches that have spread within many African countries, because their embodied and dramatic rituals promise transformation in relation to the inadequacies of everyday life. Although these churches offer 'healing' to children who have been accused of witchcraft, they do not discount accusations leveled at children, but rather are fundamental in reproducing discourses around children and bewitchment.

The above example of children being accused of witchcraft is strikingly illustrative of the ambivalence with which children are often viewed by adults. Protective measures are directed towards children as long as they do not threaten adult conceptions of order and hierarchy. To welcome children as equal citizens within public space, for example, is to challenge pernicious aspects of adult authority in fundamental ways. De Boeck acknowledges the ways in which children may be victims, but also the ways in which they are actively involved in shaping and changing social realities.

The standard European and North American interpretations of children and childhood see children as dependent beings, not yet able to act with responsibility. As has been mentioned, children are relegated to the cordoned off spaces of home and school, and those who do not comply with the latter vision of the place of the child are perceived as victims in need of help. In Sub-Saharan Africa, few children are familiar with the 'luxury of protection offered by parents, school and state (*ibid*: 181-82)'. Given pervasive problems within many African countries it is not surprising that children are perceived as victims requiring help due to political, economic, sociocultural, psychological and sexual violence. However, de Boeck insists that although it is important to acknowledge the realities that correspond with a discourse of victimization, it is equally important to recognise children's position as active subjects, as "makers and breakers" of that reality (*ibid*: 182).

In conclusion, a discussion of marginalized and pathological space through the example of bewitchment in relation to often very young children in Kinshasa, suggests the ways in which adult society often views children with great ambivalence. In both our attempts to protect children and to ensure the creation of safe and creative spaces for, and with young people, people in positions of power should be aware of their own ambivalence and the ways in which their activities are driven by insistence on conformity in relation to what is considered appropriate for a child.

### 3 Migrancy and space

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#### 3.1 Households and migration

In South Africa, a body of literature exists examining types of migration and the effects of migrancy on households, (Bundy, 1971; **Coplan**,; Kark, 1959; Lacey, 1981; Spiegel, and Wilson, 1951). Early literature examined the migration of men and boys to the cities and the mines of South Africa in search of work, initially to accrue sought after items, for example, shotguns, and to pay taxes imposed by the colonial governments of the day. When people were dispossessed of the bulk of their lands through the 1913 Land Act (a piece of legislation that confined Africans to only seven percent of the country), many Africans were forced to seek work on white-owned farms. Legislation was also passed to break the back of an emerging black South African peasantry, who as mission educated Africans, had begun to grow crops for sale and were undercutting white farmers' attempts to establish themselves. With black farmers no longer able to sell their produce to the mines and emerging towns, African families increasingly became reliant on wage remunerations sent by migrant workers to their dependents in rural areas. Without such remunerations, rural homes, as well as any remaining subsistence agriculture and animal husbandry, could not be sustained (See, for example, Ferguson, ).

These forms of migrancy became entrenched by pernicious apartheid state legislation that sought to limit permanent settlement of African people in urban areas and to ensure that the majority of the population were allocated to rural homelands or Bantustans. Legal frameworks made it difficult for Africans to acquire housing in urban areas. Only if a man had been working continuously for one employer for ten years could he retain a house in an urban setting. Strict laws attempted to confine women and children to homeland areas. When women did get permission to work in town, they often had to leave their children behind, living in the homesteads of their relatives. With changes in the global economy, many migrant men began to lose their jobs on mines and in towns during the 1980s and 90s. Increasingly, women were employed in cities. Most people argue that these dynamics have radically changed the shape of African families. More and more women have chosen to set up families of their own, bringing up their children from different partners and no longer marrying.

More recently, some attention has been paid to the ways in which children migrate to and from urban rural areas, sometimes independently, and for diverse reasons: During the last years of the apartheid regime, parents often sent children to their rural homes in an attempt to avoid the persecution of the state and to ensure their children's education when schools within urban areas had been completely disrupted (See Henderson 1999).

In my work with children in New Crossroads in the 1990s, I also found that young people, who in the eyes of their parents were behaving badly, were sent to rural relatives to live for a while in more straightened circumstances and in an environment where strictness between adults and children was seen to be upheld. Children had also often been brought up in rural areas by grandparents and, in particular, grandmothers. As they grew older, many joined their parents or parent in an urban setting. Andrew Spiegel, Vanessa Watson and Peter Wilkinson (1996) coined the term “oscillating migration” to describe black South Africans’ mobility between urban and rural areas in South Africa, arguing that households should be viewed as straddling both these nodes, and that urban and rural worlds were so intertwined that it was more useful to conceive of rural urban relations as belonging to a single unit of social endeavours. With the collapse of apartheid legislation and the suspension of all forms of influx control regulations, many more rural people have moved into urban areas and into informal settlements around the peripheries of major cities. This does not mean, however, that they have necessarily relinquished their rural homes. Rural homes remain important, particularly in relation to ancestral rituals and to ideas of autochthony (Geschiere ?). With the effects of endemic illness caused by the preponderance of the HIV/AIDS epidemic in South Africa, people are returning more and more to be nursed in their rural homes and often to die (Neves 2009).

### **3.2 On the effects of migrancy: children in different built environments**

#### **3.2.1 *Construction of landscape in an informal context***

##### **P.C. Henderson, 1992. House and Street as Locales: Constructions of landscape in New Crossroads**

In this paper I described how landscapes were constructed in New Crossroads, a poor African neighbourhood in Cape Town built during the late 1970s by the state. However, it came to house a fraction of the people who had been forcibly removed from the famous informal settlement of Old Crossroads and other ‘squatter’ settlements that were repeatedly bulldozed by the state. African men and women had long fought for the right to remain and seek work in Cape Town and repeatedly rebuilt their dwelling in response to the state’s forced removal policies. In line with the opening major theoretical threads of the review, I examined the mutually constitutive relationship between space and persons. Just as space imposed constraints on people who occupied it, they were equally engaged in inhabiting, transforming and giving meaning to spaces in surprising ways. Using Antony Giddens’ notion of locale, Henderson examined the use of space within houses, yards and streets. I explored how within a single geographical space several social spaces were juxtaposed, or displaced one another at different times of the day, and within differing configurations of social power. The paper pointed to the use of space within households and the blurring of boundaries between house and street.

Houses constituted the locale in which parents exercised their authority: where children were told of their wrong doings and sometimes beaten to try to 'teach' them 'not to learn' or to desist from 'the bad ways of the street'. Here the street was perceived as a location beyond the control of parents. Yet because children occupied the lowest rung in terms of social status, they were often asked to make space within congested houses and to go and play in the street.

Spaces were utilised for a number of conflicting aims, and were therefore polyvalent. No one special meaning was predominant at any one time. A detailed set of drawings or maps of some of the children's houses at regular intervals revealed details with which families had personalized space, details that became important in the context of social relations within families as they unfolded through time.

I argued that if one attempted to decode apartheid architectural landscape in terms of the assumptions of state designers, apart from any economic considerations with regard to the necessity of low cost housing on the part of the state, the semiological characteristics of such a landscape sought to transfix and control inhabitants. The people who inhabited such a built environment were othered, seen as requiring minimal resources, predominantly shelter to provide living space from which their labour was required outside the area. The homogeneity of the houses and street plans sought to impose a faceless homogeneity on persons occupying the environment. At the same time township populations were controlled, circumscribed, isolated from the rest of the population, from the centres of production and the centre of the city.

Despite the ways in which apartheid landscapes within African living areas sought to diminish the visibility and importance of people occupying them, township inhabitants commandeered space in ways that invested social, cultural, gendered and political meanings within these areas and profoundly challenged the ways in which they had been defined by the apartheid regime. In the paper I described how children occupied and politicised the space of the township, how girls and boys moved in different ways through its spatialities and how adults tried to impose authority within the boundaries of their homes. I also explored the dangers both from inhabitants and the state in traversing the neighbourhood and how children and men occupied the streets of New Crossroads for differing political purposes that were not always compatible.

### **3.2.2 *Children and Hostel life***

**Sean Jones, 1993. *Assaulting Childhood: Children's Experiences of Migrancy and Hostel Life in South Africa*. Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press.**

Sean Jones' book is an important anthropological study of children who lived within the cramped confines of the Lwandle migrant labour hostel complex near Somerset

West in the Western Cape. The complex comprised 56 hostel blocks with 2186 beds and was an example of housing deemed acceptable by the apartheid state for male migrants who, as we have seen, were expected to leave their children and wives behind in the so-called homelands of South Africa. Not only did South African law separate families for long periods of time with many egregious consequences, but the provisions made for workers within them were of the most, stark, minimal and uniform kind. In spite of apartheid laws, women and children began to move into the hostels prior to and after the abolition of influx control legislation that had sought to restrict access to urban spaces for Africans who were not formally employed, including many women and children.

In July 1989, Jones, having conducted a survey of 165 beds within one hostel block, estimated that the total population of the hostel complex was between five and six thousand people. The average number of people living within the space of a bed and its minimal surrounds was 4.1, and he knew of several beds where seven to eight people lived. Seventy five percent of the population of the hostels was made up of men and women over eighteen, and twenty five percent of children, most of whom were below school going age. One in three adults was employed. Each hostel block was made up of three or four bungalows.

A close description of the space in which families lived in the Lwandle Hostels created a sense of the appalling conditions that made up their daily surrounds. A bungalow comprised two rooms without a door between them. In each room, eight beds were arranged with four along two facing walls in each room. The beds were divided into pairs by a wall of 1.5 meters in height. There was a small window between each pair of beds and on the outside wall of each room. Between each pair of beds a small built-in cupboard stood. The floors were rough concrete and there was no ceiling. The roofs sometimes leaked in the rain. One bare light bulb hung from the ceiling in each room.

The person who officially rented a bed from the Cape Provincial Administration paid R9 (under one dollar) a month. Approximately 32 people shared a room. Some people made double bunks on top of the existing beds. Because of the shortage of space, people often slept in shifts on the bed, on bunks above the bed, and under the bed on the floor. People erected curtains which were drawn at night to create some form of privacy.

Ablution facilities for occupants of the hostels were unsanitary and basic with a bucket toilet system where 64 to 85 people were expected to share one bucket. These were removed only three times a week by the municipality. Cold water was provided in communal showers without any privacy. Because of a small number of refuse bins, refuse piled up on the ground outside the complexes. The state had failed to provide a school for children because it deemed their presence there illegal, so residents had constructed their own shack with a volunteer teacher who catered for 100 children only.



There were frequent power cuts and often lights went out at seven o'clock in the evening. The hostels were surrounded by bare ground that during the rainy season became a muddy mire.

For the duration of his research, Jones worked closely with 24 Children between the ages of ten to fifteen years. His study noted the ways in which children within the hostels were exposed to differing forms of violence and how little attention had been paid by academics to domestic violence, and sanctioned forms of everyday violence that were deployed in an effort to control the unruly social relations within the complex. Hitherto, within South Africa, most academic focus had been on questions concerning children's exposure to and participation within political violence. The forms of violence children could not help witnessing within their everyday experience and which Jones had learnt of largely through diaries he had asked them to keep, ranged from wife battery, physical assault and beatings, murder, molestation, and police brutality.

Jones suggested that the causes for violence were threefold: Excessive and prolonged consumption of alcohol beginning on Fridays and proceeding throughout the weekend; overcrowding where people fought over noise within the complex, uncleaned spaces and the disappearance of personal goods; and the presence of unemployed male youth in their late teens and early twenty's who were part of the Ntsara Gang from Gugulethu and who took advantage of power outages to rob hostel dwellers at night in the dark spaces between the buildings. Workers were often robbed of their pay on a Friday evening and even of their clothes. Women were also raped crossing the bush surrounding the hostels. Rules agreed to within individual bungalows and monitored by an elected leader (*ibhodi*) varied across the complex. The *ibhodi* mediated in disputes around noise levels, invasion of 'privacy', the property of others, conflict resulting from alcohol consumption and infidelity. A set of punishments largely comprising of fines could be meted out to offenders. Discipline, however, was promulgated in ways that were patriarchal and gerontocratic. Following this logic, men who had jurisdiction over a bed were responsible for the behavior of women and children who lived within that space. If a child or woman was fined through the *ibhodi*, the man responsible for them would have to pay a fine and then was free to punish the person in the way he chose to. Often punishment of this sort took the form of a beating. These were seen to be acceptable, as long as they took place outside the bungalows.

Ironically, forms of discipline, although aimed at curbing violent acts, also stimulated further conflict because its means were often violent. Rules established within particular bungalows did not hold across the spaces within the complex. There therefore did not exist easy ways of reprimanding visitors from other bungalows or strangers whose behavior was disruptive. Outsiders were often severely beaten outside the buildings when frustrations in relation to them could no longer be endured. An

important aspect of violence meted out in an attempt to restore order was that it took place in a context where the state was slow and inadequate in its responses to conflict. The police often arrived hours after an event and when they did raid the hostels they were singularly brutal and disrespectful towards hostel dwellers, destroying their possessions and pushing women who confronted them or even beating them to the floor. This led to a form of retributive justice. Jones described the murder of a young man generally liked within the complex by another who was widely disliked because of his disrespectful and violent behavior. When the deceased young man's brother's retaliated by stabbing to death the man who had killed their brother, hostel dwellers refused to divulge their identities to the police.

Jones' study, in addition to creating a sense of the horrors and squalor of confined spaces within a hostel, also charted the multiple migrations of hostel dwellers and their families, including the independent migration of children. His careful work showed how the childhoods of many of the children living within the hostel challenged stereotypes that assumed that the majority of African children, although separated from their migrant fathers and sometimes their mothers for long periods of time, lived with some stability with relatives in rural communities. Many of the children whom Jones described moved frequently between rural and urban areas, and within urban areas. Children were sent back to rural areas intermittently when money was short for schooling, for example, and in the process were sometimes separated from some of their brothers and sisters whom they missed. Children, who for long periods of time had lived with grandparents, upon their deaths or when suddenly separated from them, were often disorientated and distressed. Children described the effects of frequent separations from grandparents, siblings and parents and, for example, recalled how when they were very young, mothers might disappear without saying goodbye on their return to an urban area. Local patterns of 'protecting' children from hurt dictated that they would feel less pain if not told where their parents was going to and when they were leaving. Yet separations had clearly been extremely painful for some of the children. Mothers often suffered greatly, too, in leaving their children behind in rural areas. Mothers' journeys to the city were precipitated by their husbands no longer sending remittances to rural areas, by their own decision to seek work, and by requests from their partners for a visit.

Children and parents showed mutual understandings of the difficulties that each faced within the hostel environment and delineated differences between urban and rural milieus. Parents expressed distress at the conditions within the hostels and their inability to provide the upbringing people idealised within rural settings where proper separation of people in terms of living space in relation to age and sex existed. Parents felt children saw things they should not have seen, in particular, sexual activities. Girls could be occupied to some extent through cleaning duties within a bed-hold, but boys had great freedom, roaming and playing outside for most of the day and returning to the bed-hold

for meals and sleep. Children were also concerned for their parents. They were acutely aware of the difficulties parents faced in rearing them. The mutual regard between parents and children is expressed in the following quotation:

While conditions in the hostels may at times have led to flaring tempers and antagonism between parents and children, their fundamental understanding of one another's separate difficulties, and those which they shared by virtue of the conditions in which they all lived, modulated and perhaps even countered the more serious hostilities which might otherwise have arisen...many had been separated from one another in the past, some for long periods of time. Parents and children therefore valued greatly their being together (*ibid*: 138-139).

Although not all children were assaulted and although not all their parents assaulted one another exposure to violence was inevitable within the hostel. The overriding reason for this was the lack of any clear spatial divide between private and public space.

The overlap between public and private space, combined with the immense overcrowding of the hostels, opened children to a far wider experience of violence than would have been the case in normal circumstances (*ibid*:160).

Despite the demise of apartheid, migrancy has not ceased for the majority of Africans in South Africa. This is because work is still located largely within urban environments and because rural homes continue to be invested with meaning.

Mamphela Ramphele (1993) in her book, *A Bed Called Home: Life in the Migrant Labour Hostels of Cape Town* explored more explicitly spatiality in theoretical terms within a number of hostels in African townships in Cape Town, in particular in Langa, Gugulethu and Nyanga. Her purpose was to examine the impact of hostel environments on occupants and to tract skills required in surviving these environments. In line with Henri Lefebvre's quotation that opens the review, Ramphele insisted on the political and ideological dynamics of space. Her book aimed to trace the effects of macro political and ideological restrictions on the psycho-social minutiae of everyday life for migrants within the hostels (*ibid*: 2).

### 3.2.3 *Social relations and tenure change*

**Fiona Ross. *Houses without Doors: Diffusing Domesticity in Die Bos*. 1995. Pretoria: HSRC: Co-operative Research programme on Marriage and Family Life.**

**AND**

***Upscaling The Flats: Raw Life in a Post-Apartheid Community*. Forthcoming. Cape Town: University of Cape Town Press.**

Fiona Ross (1995) conducted a fourteen-month study of social relations in a small informal Western Cape settlement near the town of Somerset West. She described how residents created extensive, but short-lived networks of support linking individuals in complex and extremely fluid ways. Insecurities of tenure, income and space conjoined in particular ways, contributing to fluidity and change within social relations over time and in shifting configurations of people who shared income food, fuel and services (washing clothes, collecting fuel for fires, cooking and cleaning, and child-minding). The prevalent use of alcohol and a thread of violence within social relationships contributed to the fragmentary nature of peoples' lives in Die Bos. Domestic rearrangements were therefore not only frequent but often drastic. Through offering of various services, individuals generated rights over time across domestic units. Rights did not always emerge through relationships of kinship, but through services rendered. Friendship and reciprocity were of importance. Improvised and sometimes short-lived exchanges diffused domesticity within the settlement. Food and alcohol were shared across households in exchange for childcare, collection of fuel and assistance in meal preparation.

Ross (2009) subsequently followed the same community to a formal housing settlement in which the built environment in which people live has been improved through the provision of brick houses, tarred roads, flush toilets, water and electricity. The housing units provided were sometimes smaller than the shack dwellings people had constructed in Die Bos. Eligibility for housing in the new settlement, The Park, required that inhabitants of Die Bos present themselves as belonging to coherent households. As we have seen above, this was not the case for most households in the shack settlement. Indeed, flexibility and the intermittent care that residents provided for one another crossed the boundaries of discrete housing units, kin-groups and lines of friendship were of the utmost importance in sustaining lives. To be eligible for a brick house required that a head of household with dependents present themselves as a unit. Single people in Die Bos, who nevertheless had provided care for numbers of people 'passing through', and who were recognised by community leaders as long-term residents, were strategically linked with 'official' dependents in order for them to be eligible for a house.

A discourse of *ordenlikheid*, or respectability, emerged within Die Bos around the proposed move to The Park. Several people who had never been married, but who had lived with their partners for some time, decided to get officially married. This placed pressure on couples, who for valid reasons did not want to get married or to conform to an ideal of what it was to be *ordentlik*. In seeking to live up to the image of respectability that the housing scheme represented in the eyes of the inhabitants of Die Bos, social problems that existed in the open and to which people had improvised temporary solutions, were now hidden, or became invisible in people's attempts to live

up to a more 'sanitised' life. In some instances, young children who witnessed violence between parents and /or guardians, and who formerly found refuge and safety within particular shacks in the area, now hid the fact that their parents were physically fighting and risked being beaten themselves through staying in their houses, because it had become shameful to 'advertise' domestic violence. Formerly, children - who were hungry in Die Bos, because their parents were fighting and had not fed them - would often be given food at neighbouring shacks in exchange for some chore. A discourse emerged around *ordentlikheid* and its perceived opposite expressed as 'belonging to the bush'. Ross refers to the 'rawness of life' in the settlement because of the extreme poverty, daily hardships, lack of income and high consumption of alcohol and drugs.

Once people moved to the new settlement, many could not find their way around it, because of the uniformity of the houses and the grid-like nature of the streets. Whereas in the old community various spaces and places constituted nodes of conviviality, no such spaces existed in the new environment. In Die Bos, open spaces near the water tank provided women a place to meet and to exchange news, and on open tracks of land people made fires early in the morning around which people congregated and drank their coffee before going to work. The lack of such spaces in The Park lead to a sense of isolation and separation between people who had valued their ties in Die Bos, despite the many 'ugly' aspects of life there. Pertinently, Ross suggests that although the built environment had in some respects improved for the community, other material realities had not. Differences emerged very quickly between residents who had sustained incomes and those who did not, and who could therefore not equip their houses according to the ideals they had of what a 'proper' house should contain.

In her book, Ross describes an attempt to map Die Bos after she had been away for some time during which the community had expanded, and in which paths had been reconfigured. She tried to construct a map through walking the paths with a friend who introduced her to people along the way. She soon became completely disorientated because of the ways in which paths had shifted and dwellings had impinged upon walkways. She realised that expression of irritability between herself and her friend in relation to the map making was because they had different notions of what was important in a map. She noticed how the woman accompanying her used the exercise to greet her friends and to avoid houses in which she did not have ties. Social ties she had with people were paramount for her rather than a distanced map that laid out dwellings accurately.

Ross realised, too, that the ways in which inhabitants occupied the space of the community was gendered. Mature women and girls who had become sexually active were expected to stay in the vicinity of their dwellings, to undertake domestic tasks and errands in traversing the community, for example, in collecting water and travelling to

purchase food. They were castigated through gossip or *skelling* if they did not comply, and if they were seen to wander the streets and paths of the settlement. Two young girls who had commenced sexual relationships, and who did not conform to normative demands of the settlement, were punished by being told to walk along the one edge of the settlement where human waste and rubbish accumulated. People were also instructed not to communicate with them.

In her mapping exercise, Ross abandoned the idea of a cognitive abstract map - one akin to formal road maps or architectural maps in de Certeau's terms - and explored the notion of constructing maps that emphasised the social relations within an environment, as well as experiential aspects of living in Die Bos. She imagined 'maps' structured around people's movement through the settlement in a day, the idea of different smells during the trajectory of a day, and of different sounds. Such sound and olfactory scapes, as well as a relationship to environment structured through gendered expectations, give much more people-centred understandings and evocations of space, time, enjoyment, conviviality and activity. Such mappings infuse space with the importance of meaning, and of *habitus*. They gesture towards the mutually constitutive relationship between space and persons to which I referred in the introduction of this review.

#### 3.2.4 *Mapping children's space*

**Pamela Reynolds, 1989. *Childhood in Crossroads: Cognition and Society in South Africa*. Cape Town: David Phillip.**

Pamela Reynolds, in "The Children and Space" (*ibid*: 89-118), a chapter from the above book, sought to explore cognitive maps children had of Crossroads, the informal settlement referred to above by myself (Henderson 1992), their awareness of landmarks beyond it, and their situatedness in relation to the cosmos.

She accompanied each child on a walk around their home and its surrounds and then into the streets, where children pointed out what was important for them, as well as where their friends and relatives lived. During their walks through the surrounding environment, Reynolds asked each child to take her to the places that were important to them and that they frequently visited. As they walked, they spoke of external features, for example, the airport, factories and where the major roads went. They discussed routes to school and church and shops. As the child led, Reynolds sketched their route and the features mentioned.

She later asked each child to make a map of the area in which they lived. The map was constructed out of felt pieces, each of which had been made by Reynolds to represent a feature mentioned by all the children. Maps began with Reynolds and the

child laying out boundary features around the edges of a large piece of felt. Features included major roads, mountain ranges, the airport, trees along main roads, the school nearest the children's homes, crossroads, and the sand-dunes along one edge of the settlement. Each child would then place a felt piece depicting their own house in relation to the school and then fill out the map with all the features of Crossroads that they knew about. Reynolds writes of the above mapping exercises with the children:

The major impression the children gave was of a world closely bound. The children paid little or no regard to external features of the landscape, whether on the walk or the map. None used the track of the sun as a reference point in locating places. They had little notion of what was 'out there' and how whatever was 'out there' existed in relation to Crossroads – the world of skyscrapers, ships, road networks, leisure and work. Only two had swum in the sea, one had been to the docks and none had visited the zoo or been to either range of mountains. For most of the sample children, the world consisted of two patches: one in the Transkei and one in Crossroads and they were linked by the bus (*ibid*: 96).

The important buildings children pointed out where the Administration Block, the police station, the bus terminus, the post office and the church. Children were curious about the world outside of their living areas but had little access to information about the external world because they did not speak English or Afrikaans, the languages in which TV programmes were then relayed. Although they sometimes asked adults about the external world of work, adults often dismissed their enquiries. Within Crossroads nodes were important to children because they were places where people gathered. These were water taps (there were only sixteen placed on the periphery of the settlement), shops, schools, crèches, clinics and hawker's stands.

Designated areas for children to play did not exist in the settlement. Because children mainly played in the streets, some injured through car accidents and one was killed. Children played in empty patches where they initiated soccer games, gambling, and elaborate house games on the sand-dunes which were perfect for forming impressions of houses and furniture.

The circumscribed spaces that children described and represented reflected the effects of the apartheid state on deliberately cordoned off African populations and limited their access to services and space within so-called 'white' areas of the city.

### **3.3 Children and youth in Africa: Agency and victimisation**

**Alcinda Honwana and Filip De Boeck (eds). 2005. *Makers and Breakers: Children and Youth in Postcolonial Africa*. Oxford: James Currey.**

Honwana and de Boeck have edited a volume on young people and children's forceful presence across the African continent today. The volume made up of the contribution of several authors illustrates children's involvement in every sphere of social life from war to informal economies, religious movements, the creation of popular culture, performance and personal style in conversation with global trends, and challenging sexualities. Despite young people being at the forefront of societal and often violent upheavals and reconfigurations, the authors argue that children and youth tend to occupy marginal social positions in relation to formal power within dissolving nation states.

Honwana and de Boeck point to how the social category of youth is constructed as one of the greatest challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, because of the ways in which young people are no longer held within the bounds of state prerogatives, and the ways in which they often live bypassing systems of authority, and social norms and ideals.

Contributions to the volume demonstrate the intersection of the micro-politics of households with the macro-demography of huge numbers of young people, who are largely unemployable in the formal sectors of national economies. Youth, in contemporary Africa are both perpetrators and victims in civil conflict, as well as leaders and led in movements of political reform and religious renewal. Honwana and de Boeck describe children and young people as both "innovators and dupes in the globalization of culture".

They nevertheless link the vulnerability of children and young people to a dearth of education, a lack of employment possibilities and the inadequacies of livelihoods, healthcare and food. Political conflict, armed violence and the HIV/AIDS crisis have greatly exacerbated the challenges children and young people face. Yet Honwana and de Boeck insist, as intimated above, that children are powerful agents within social matrices involved in responding to and shaping the harsh realities in which they find themselves.

### **3.4 Children's migration in the context of HIV/AIDS**

**Nicola Ansell and Lorraine van Blerk, 2004. Children's Migrations as a Household/family Strategy: coping with AIDS in Lesotho and Malawi *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 30(3): 673-690. (See also Lorraine van Blerk, Nicola Ansell, 2006. Children's experiences of migration: Moving in the wake of AIDS in southern Africa. *Environmental and Planning D: Society and Space* 24: 449-471).**

Ansell and van Blerk have explored how households in Lesotho and Malawi employ children's migration as strategies to enable them to cope with the effects of HIV/AIDS. Migration amongst children in these circumstances has to do with family decisions about where they should live, following the demise of one or both of their parents.



Children's capacities to make a contribution to the households into which they will move are also considered in deciding where they will live. Decisions around where a child will be placed are compromises amongst groups of kin in which senses of obligation on their part are considered in relation to available resources, the needs of the children and accommodating families, and the capabilities of children, as well as their own preferences.

Importantly, decisions around where a child will move are agentive strategies that undermine notions of poor people as passive victims waiting for state or NGO support (*ibid*: 674). The article raises problems around the notion of the household as narrowly defined in southern African studies, questioning whether it may be used as an effective unit of analysis. Co-resident household seldom represents a complete family (p. 676). As in South African, families in Lesotho and Malawi are spatially dispersed. In contradistinction to the conception of a nuclear family, most co-resident households contain multigenerational relatives, as well as some non-kin. Even before the AIDS pandemic twenty percent of households in these countries contained children not related to the household head. Extended families are spatially dispersed comprising several households that straddle both rural and urban spaces. In line with other literature on the nature of households in southern Africa, as has been seen from what has been written above, they are described as fluid, contracting and expanding for different reasons, including migration. The migration of AIDS affected children is largely between households within extended family networks. Not only do family members move to different households, but the relationships binding them together change. Households are therefore sustained through a larger network of relationships that are given the name, "the household/family nexus", by the authors.

### 3.5 Migration and the imaginary in the construction of rural homesteads

**Ngwane, Zolani, 2003. 'Christmas Time' and the Struggles for the Household in the Countryside: Rethinking the Cultural Geography of Migrant Labour in South Africa. *Journal of southern African Studies*, 29(3):681-695.**

Zolani Ngwane is an anthropologist who makes an unusual contribution to thinking about the meaning of migrancy and of movement in relation to the construction of the idea of a rural home in South Africa. He explicitly explores the creation of the idea of the local through migrancy and through the imaginary. As we have seen above, many writers who have considered changes within South African society over time have written about shifting patterns of labour migration and the deleterious effects movement has had on the 'coherence' of family life. Ngwane suggests that a discourse of dissolution of kin relations, however, predates migrant labour mobility - he mentions, for example, the enormous dislocating impact of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Difeqane wars - and argues that migrancy, rather than leading to the dissolution of families, has been the

means through which local homes are maintained. He therefore suggests that the notion of family solidity has been the invention of functionist anthropological theorists who sought to describe continuity and solidity in social relations and within families, thus creates the myth of bounded, timeless communities.

In his recent ethnographic work in the rural Eastern Cape, Ngwane points to the tensions within contemporary families that manifest along gender and intergenerational lines. He refers to a body of folk tales that imagine domesticated home-ground in contradistinction to an outside “wild” world. In such tales, morality and order are associated with the notion of home and their opposite with the wider world. Male migrants’ anecdotal stories related how individuals reacted to events in their places of work, for example, the Soweto uprisings in 1976 and their aftermath. They tell of men’s roles in assisting those threatened by youth in the face of what they saw as an inversion of appropriate generational hierarchies. Urban women, without fail were invoked within these tales as immoral and exploitative. Men reiterated the “value of the stick” as a corrective device aimed at subduing women who challenged what they perceived to be appropriate. Rather they emphasised the danger of urban environments, their fears in leaving their places of work (mainly domestic work) and traversing urban spaces. The women’s accounts were not fundamentally different from males’ understandings, in that they also underscored binary distinctions pertaining to places and their qualities.

Ngwane examined Christmas time in the rural settlements in which he conducted research. This is a period of year when migrant workers return to their rural homes to conduct important family rituals and to stage various celebrations. Ngwane describes Christmas as a time of unbridled consumption and excess drawing on the philosopher, George Bataille to consider the importance of excessive consumption in displays of status, power and freedom. He suggests the importance of desire and imagination in constructing, or holding up, if only for a time, an idea of coherence, a time of plenty, of presenting an image of an imagined time before the troubled present. The evocation of an ideal past in family rituals therefore becomes a moral framework and has little to do with the literal historical past. The consumption of Christmas in recreating “a time before” imprints on the household an ideal set of circumstances (*ibid*: 696). Male and female migrants (all of whom were single) who individually held ritualised beer drinking parties, in which seniority and clanship were performed, were equally seen as “reawakening” their father’s homesteads. Before their return to urban places of work rituals were performed to strengthen homesteads, for example, by driving nails into the ground. The way that Ngwane expresses it is that conceptions of households produced during Christmas become driven into the ground “as seed”. Although men may be absent for most of the year, during Christmas they present themselves as heads of households.

As has been stated above, there has been a decrease in the number of men and an increase in the number of women involved in migrant work. With these changes people have begun to spend money on different things. Whereas in the past men invested their earning in cattle herds, women spend money on the construction of their homesteads and on household furniture. With changes in gender relations and gendered economic power, there has been an increase in violence against women. Men and women also contest different ideas about what constitutes the ideal homestead and the distribution of power within social relations structured through age and gender within it (*ibid*: 698).

Ngwane concludes that migrancy may be viewed as a constellation of people, ideas and practices and that it plays an important role in linking localities to the world at large. Focus on local contexts of the cultural politics of migrancy reinserts the local into globalisation debates. We are reminded that the material and cultural resources of globalisation featured prominently in local struggles long before globalisation itself became the obsession in scholarship. Satellite television and the language of self-representation that this has made available to young people continues to expand the horizons of local cosmology while also offering new resources for articulating the terms of belonging in the local. It must also be said that it is almost impossible to delimit the local in South Africa because of the extent of mobility within African families that predate apartheid. Ideological maps of the proper family are relevant in terms of struggles over structuring social relations (*ibid*: 699) and migration may be viewed as a way of being local rather than a means of youth running away, as for example, suggested by the historian Ben Carton (2000).

**David Neves, 2009. HIV/AIDS and migration within the rural Eastern Cape. Paper delivered at the University of the Western Cape, 19 March 2009.**

In an unpublished paper, Neves examines the impact of HIV/AIDS related illness and death on what he calls “return” or “back” migration within a former homeland region of South Africa. In line with what has already been written, he notes that formal male migration has been increasingly replaced by informal female migration between both rural-urban and within intra-rural locales. Neves argues that “illness-induced back migration is driven not only by the search for health and succour, but also by complex amalgams of shifting entitlement and obligation.” Migrants return to their rural homes in search of health and healing, and their reincorporation into households is achieved in varied ways. They are “subjects or dispensers of care” depending on the resources with which they return to rural households.

## 4 Children's services in relation to children's spaces

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**Peter Moss and Pat Petrie. 2006. *From Children's Services to Children's Spaces: Public Policy, Children and Childhood*. London. Routledge Falmer.**

I end this part of the review by examining a book that challenges the ways we view public state provision for children and young people. The ways in which public provision for children is envisaged reflects different understandings of childhood and of children's 'place', and hence young people's relation to space and its social creation. Moss and Petrie point to a sometimes dominant, unacknowledged paradigm in which provisions are often framed. Here children are seen as in need of "rescue and protection" and as "needy, weak and poor". Equally young people are perceived as a potential threat "to order and progress", something that societies seek to protect itself against. The authors therefore question the narrow and polarizing limits within which childhood is often imagined, as well as the notion that provision is primarily a technical and disciplinary matter in that children are expected to conform to a set of already established societal norms, a requirement that necessarily involves various forms of surveillance.

In contrast, their view of provision is of "a site for ethical and democratic practice involving critical thinking" that leaves "the future open for change". Ideally provisions should not be aimed at predetermined outcomes, or futures, but rather at creating spaces for living childhoods in the present and for forming relationships and solidarities between children, and between adults and children (*ibid*: 2).

A historical perspective in considering space is important as it leads to questioning ideological investments in notions of childhood. Moss and Petrie ask why the current era - in ways that are comparable to 19<sup>th</sup> century - seems to emphasise intervention to such a heightened extent. Does our obsession with the place of children point to a narrowing of focus away from broader forms of social inequalities that we are not prepared to scrutinize too closely? They write:

Is it because services, initiatives and programmes targeted at children, seem to offer promising technical solutions to the social damage caused by a neo-liberal market capitalism questioning of the values nor regulation of the processes embedded in this form of capitalism? Is social engineering of children's lives the way to give the modern nation state a competitive edge in the global rat race? Can it reconcile the promotion of an enterprise economy with aspirations to social cohesion and social justice? Does the practice of free markets and individual choice need greater discipline and control, so that more economic deregulation requires greater social regulation?

Moss and Petrie suggest that there are three ideas at the heart of dominant discourse around policy provisions for children, these being that “children are the private responsibility of parents”, that they are necessarily “passive dependents”, and that parents are “consumers of marketised services for their children” (*ibid*: 5). They argue for foregrounding children as diverse citizens, as members of a “social group with rights, rich in potential, strong, powerful and competent”, and as equal stakeholders with adults in a common social enterprise (*ibid*: 15-16). The latter ideas expand the notion of service provision across a broader and more enabling terrain.

As a means of enriching childhood, promoting children's culture, enabling services should be a means for fostering the visibility, inclusion and active participation of all children in society. Children's services would be more productively and ethically conceptualised as community institutions and public spaces where children and adults engage together on a variety of projects of social, cultural, political and economic significance (*ibid*: 12-13).

Within current policy frameworks there is an implicitly individualistic idea of the place of the child and a failure to recognise children as constituting social groups. There is therefore little reference to the existence of children's culture or the importance of children's rights, or indeed the possibility of children themselves having agency (*ibid*: 7). The discourse of childhood development fails to engage with children as they are at any particular age and implicitly holds the fear of what children may become once having left childhood (Moss *et al* 1999:25-26).

Significantly for the purposes of this review, Moss and Petrie suggest a suspension of the term “childhood provision” in relation to public policy. They replace it with a different concept, namely “children's spaces”.

In their view, the concept of children's services connotes a particular understanding of public provisions for children that is instrumental and atomizing. They suggest that provisions, constituted as predetermined solutions, become “technologies for acting upon children, or parts of children, to produce specific, predetermined and adult-defined outcomes”. In contrast:

The concept of children's spaces understand provisions as environments of many possibilities – cultural and social, but also economic, political, ethical, aesthetic, physical – some predetermined, others not, some initiated by adults, others by children.

In other words, the concept of children's spaces presumes unknown resources, possibilities and potentials. It does not simply imply a physical space, a setting for groups of children. Moss and Petrie write:

[Children's space] ... carries the meaning of being a social space, a domain of social practices and relationships (Knowles 1999:241); a cultural space, where values, rights and cultures are created; and a discursive space for differing perspectives and forms of expression, where there is room for dialogue, confrontation (in the sense of exchanging differing experience and views), deliberation and critical thinking, where children and others can speak and be heard. In this sense, the concept of 'children's space' implies possibilities for children and adults to contest understandings, values, practices and knowledge (*ibid*: . )

In my view, listening to children is most productively accomplished if in line with Moss and Petrie in their reference of Rose (1999:20) we introduce, "a kind of awkwardness into the fabric of one's experience, of interrupting the fluency of narratives that encode that experience and making them stutter."

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## Part 2: Places for children

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*“There is an intimate link between the physical environments that children and young people live in and the quality of their lives. Their housing, the water they drink, the air they breathe, the traffic on their streets, and the quality of their schools and neighbourhoods all have an impact on their health, happiness and long-term development.” (Granberg and Olofsson 2006)*

### 5 Children's place in the built environment

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This section examines the ways in which children inherit, create and experience their environments – particularly the ‘in-between’ spaces that are outside the defined areas of home and school. Most of the literature on children's perception and experience of their local environment focuses on urban areas, and much is derived from northern and developed countries, where there has been growing interest in the sociology of childhood and children's geographies.

#### 5.1 Making place – children as creators

Children's everyday experience of place may be distinguished between formal “places for children” which are designated by adults, and the more informal “children's places” which children find and use, often unnoticed or unauthorized by adults. (Malone 2002; Rasmussen 2004; Weller and Bruegel 2009). A participatory study, in which children took researchers on tours of their own environments, describes three main physical settings around which the time and space flows of childhood revolve – home, school and defined recreational space. The ‘institutionalised triangle’ consists of formalized environments that are created by adults and designated by them as ‘places for children.’ Less visible than these ‘urban islands’ are the routes traversed between them. Here, the study describes children deviating from formalized routes – taking short cuts through holes in fences, or stopping to ‘play’ in spaces where they are meant to keep moving, such as pavements. While the emphasis on creating ‘places for children’ within neighbourhoods may be explicitly about a concern for children's welfare and safety, the effect is to take children out of their neighbourhoods rather than to create neighbourhoods for children. Children in turn seek opportunities (even breaking rules) to transcend the boundaries between institutionalized space and neighbourhood, in

which they can create their own places. Lived experience makes 'places' out of 'spaces' because it is through use that 'undifferentiated spaces' are encoded with 'specific meaning and attributes' (Rasmussen 2004).

Set the northern welfare state Denmark, the study raises important points about the disjuncture between adults' and children's conception of place, giving us a departure point for thinking about ways in which children inhabit the city and how children, as actors, create place from space.

- Children's places combine the concrete and the imaginary
- Places are created for collective purposes, or for individually determined purposes – they can be public and social, or intensely private, even invisible
- Places can be transient or temporary – for example, the physical space may change, access may be removed, seasonal changes may affect use, or they may be voluntarily abandoned or modified as children develop.

While adult-defined places may be viewed as serving the best interests of children, they also run the risk of limiting children's freedom and agency to imprint their own identity on their environments through individual and social use. The Danish study notes that the social structure of childhood has changed over the decades during which spaces for children have been increasingly institutionalized.

## **5.2 Neighbourhood and the paradox of public space**

*"The prevailing 'overarching map' idea of city design overlooks the fact that people are part of multiple networks that cannot be steered in particular ways that designers think are appropriate.... Even when urban planners have clear plans, they seldom work because they don't capture the essential nature in which people organise themselves through their networks in a city. Defining the relationships between people, places and spaces is crucial to finding out exactly how urbanisation deploys itself."*  
(South African Cities Network 2008)

Urban spaces are described as "contested" in that the same spaces are occupied and used in varying ways by different individuals and groups. Despite the fact that children comprise a large proportion of the population, they tend to be treated by society as marginal groups, whose social or cultural activities may be viewed as deviant or dangerous unless they are supervised and 'contained', away from the streets and public view (Malone 2002; Travlou 2003). Not only is it important for children to claim and create place, but there are also arguments that diverse and visible use of public space – including as a site for constructing youth culture – actually contributes to the social capital of urban environments.

A proposed framework for thinking about boundaries and exclusionary practices in public space distinguishes between 'closed' spaces which are strongly classified in

terms of physical boundaries, visible and social homogeneity, and 'open' or weakly classified spaces, which are more flexible and diverse (Malone 2002).

**Table 1. Characteristics of open and closed spaces**

<i>Characteristic</i>	<i>Open spaces</i>	<i>Closed spaces</i>
Definition of boundary	Weakly defined boundaries	Strongly defined boundaries
Value system	Multiple values supported	Dominant values normalized
Response to difference & diversity	Difference and diversity celebrated	Difference and diversity not tolerated
Role of policing	Policing of boundaries not necessary	Preoccupation with boundary maintenance, high levels of policing
Position of public	Public occupy the margin	Public occupy the centre
View of culture	Multicultural	Monocultural

*Source: Silbey, D (1995), Geographies of exclusion – adapted by Malone, K (2002)*

Notable in the discussion is the flexible or temporal nature of 'open' space, which is use-defined (for instance the 'space' of a festival or event or social gathering), in contrast to the exclusive character of the space either in its (permanent) physical boundary or its (defined) membership and function – as in the case of a school or church. The orderly and exclusive construction of space is described as an attempt to 'purify' space, while Sennet argues that disorder and difference force people to 'engage with the other' producing the social interaction that is essential in an urban environment (Silbey 1995, cited in Malone 2002).

The literature refers to the paradoxical use of public space where it becomes the site of popular protest or struggle (in South Africa, for example, a notable event for youth was the 1976 uprising in Soweto). Here we see the strategic use of public space to assert identity, and what Malone describes as 'inversion', where minorities or oppressed groups take up the centre of public space.

The idea of needing physical 'space' to make subjective 'place' raises questions about how children achieve 'place-making' in the context of high density living environments such as low-cost housing developments and urban informal settlements. What spaces are available and how conducive are these spaces to the making of 'place'? Low-cost housing developments such as those developed under the South African national housing subsidy scheme have tended to prioritise the construction of housing units, with little attention to the interior space of settlements. In the absence of civic amenities and spaces that lend themselves to multiple uses, the public spaces available for social activity and play tend to be confined to the routes or streets. In informal settlements, and particularly those that are densely populated, the space limitations may be even more restrictive, although informal settlements on undemarcated land may in

some instances have the advantage of providing spaces between dwellings that are away from roads and the danger of traffic.

Simone (in South African Cities Network 2008) points out that cities generally have significant amounts of space that are under-used, and that attention should be paid to how these spaces are used by local residents. This point is made in reference to possibilities for illuminating informal economic activities, but it holds true for understanding the use of space for recreational and social purposes too.

### **5.3 Children as actors in the development of neighbourhood social capital**

*“Neighbourhood quality, accessibility and opportunity for children and adolescents are determined to some degree by the level of formal municipal service provision. But local community institutions like churches, cultural centres and recreational clubs also play a significant role, and they depend on the level of social organization and commitment within a community.” (Innocenti Research Centre 2002)*

Some of the literature explores the connection between children's space and social capital. The concept of social capital is derived from economic theory and provides an additional dimension to the “capital triptych” (natural – physical – human) commonly used as measures of economic growth and sustainable development. In this traditional economic terminology, “natural capital” would describe the stock of natural resources available to a community or society; physical or “produced” capital includes the assets that generate income (including buildings, machinery, equipment, etc); and human capital refers to the properties of individuals; the wealth of knowledge, skills and experience that reside in people

The literature on social capital is extensive and varied, and writers differ in the way they define it. But there appears to be broad agreement on some main defining features of social capital:

- social capital is an asset or resource or “accumulated stock”
- it is a broad term encompassing the features of social organisation – networks, institutions, individual connections – and the norms, values and trust that arise from them
- it implies a collective structure or environment, and relationships of trust, mutual support and reciprocity
- it is a cohesive force in a community or society
- it is a resource which can produce a “stream of benefits” – for instance by facilitating coordination and collective action for mutual benefit, but can also produce negative outcomes, such as social exclusion (Hall 2003).

The social capital literature uses the terms “bonding” and “bridging” to distinguish between horizontal forms of social capital (internal relations amongst individuals and homogenous groupings) and between-group relations which link groups at different levels in the power structure and with varying access to resources. Thus “bonding” ties are associated with social support and reciprocity within homogenous groups, and results in social cohesion and a “sense of belonging”, whereas “bridging” capital brings together more heterogeneous members or networks and is empowering in that it enables individuals to access resources outside of their homogenous group. In the development context, it is observed that poor communities tend to have an abundance of “bonding” capital which enables them to “get by”, but a lack of “bridging” social capital which would enable them to “get ahead” (Hall 2003).

Three dimensions of socially organised neighbourhoods have relevance for child well-being, and are outlined by Catherine Ward in a chapter on monitoring child well-being at small-area level: “Intergenerational closure” refers to the links between adults and children, and of adults to the parents of their children, giving parents opportunities to gain information about their children from external sources and establish parenting norms. “Reciprocal exchange” relates to the social support that parents and their children can draw upon. “Informal social control and mutual support of children” refers to the ability of residents to intervene on behalf of other parents’ children and is a form of collective efficacy (Ward 2007)

Despite the massive social capital discourse, there is an absence of literature about conceptualizing and measuring social capital in relation to children. Many of the studies that measure social capital pay little attention to children’s agency, and rather overemphasize the influence of parent’s on children’s lives, or use adult social capital as a proxy for children’s social capital. “A more active conceptualization of children, drawing on the sociology of children (James and Prout 1990) would explore how children themselves actively generate, draw on, or negotiate their own social capital, or indeed make links for their parents, or even provide active support for parents” (Harpham 2002). The main contribution to the understanding of children’s social capital is through studies that consider neighbourhood or community effects. While family-level factors may dominate in early childhood, neighbourhood effects would be expected to emerge in middle childhood (for instance, through school and peers), and factors beyond the neighbourhood (bridging social capital) would emerge for older adolescents (Aber et al 1997, cited in Harpham 2002).

Trudy Harpham of the Young Lives project, explores issues of social capital measurement from the perspective of children. She explains why social capital matters to child welfare outcomes and provides a simple theoretical model in which aspects of social capital within and outside the family (extent of networks, participation in local



organizations, access to support and information, etc) can be determinants of child welfare outcomes (physical and mental health, life skills, developmental stage for age, etc) via a range of intermediary variables related to both the parent/caregiver and the child. Social capital may enhance parental resources and decisions to invest in the child in various ways, and also influence parental values and norms. Intermediate variables for the child include the amount and quality of child care and education, attitudes towards education, values and norms, work and responsibilities, risk-taking behaviour and exposure to threats. So, for instance, “informational support received from the network of a parent may influence the choice of which school to send a child to, which in turn may affect the quality of education, the attitude of the child and ultimately the life skills of the child” (Harpham 2002; Weller and Bruegel 2009)

The Young Lives project ([www.younglives.org.uk](http://www.younglives.org.uk)) is an international study of child poverty, which tracks 2000 children in four countries – Vietnam, Peru, Ethiopia and India. It includes both qualitative and quantitative measures of social capital, and the longitudinal design means that it will be possible to analyse the longer-term effects of different levels and types of social capital at different ages.

British researchers Susan Weller and Irene Bruegel write about children's “place” in the development of neighbourhood social capital, with an explicit aim to promote children's voices in more mainstream urban debates. While child-centred research has focused on the importance of defined micro-level spaces in children's lives, there has been little attention by social capital theorists to the role of space, place and geography from a children's perspective, and child-centred research in turn has seldom addressed issues of social cohesion or children as social agents in their neighbourhoods (Harpham 2002; Weller and Bruegel 2009). The research investigates the effect of children's spatial freedoms – not only on their own autonomy and horizontal relations, but also on neighbourhood social cohesion through the development social networks, trust and neighbourliness.

Societal concerns about children's ‘place’ are influenced by perceptions of children (particularly older children) as being a “threat to the social hegemony of what is commonly regarded as a ‘naturally’ adult domain” (Weller and Bruegel 2009). But research undertaken in five very different neighbourhoods in the UK showed that children have an important role in “enabling the development of social cohesion and social capital, either directly via their own actions – for example, helping neighbours, ‘hanging out’ and building local networks – or indirectly by providing connections and networks for their parents and other member of the community” (Weller and Bruegel 2009). The research focused on the period of children's transition to secondary school – a period of growing independence and spatial freedom for children – in contexts where there was very limited access to well-resourced schools.

In discussing children's autonomy, the authors distinguish between "place" effect and "school effect". Children living in the inner city (typically poorer and more racially diverse) were more likely to have the freedom to travel and explore their environments independently and to "hang out" than those living in the suburbs. Suburban children had more physical space at their disposal but were subject to more parental surveillance, and their activities and social networks were more structured and controlled. The very process of 'letting go' in this developmental period meant that parents, coming to terms with their children's increased mobility, needed to explore their own areas more fully in order to guide and advise children in 'street literacy' – about routes, safety, transport systems and so on, and in this way parents themselves gained new insights in the area their children inhabited. This is just one of the ways in which children are instrumental in developing parental and neighbourhood social capital. Another was related to the way in which adults are drawn into the social networks which children establish, if they are given the freedom to do so outside the existing social network of their parents. The authors challenge the dominant social capital theory that sees social capital as "unitary within families", and rather describe children as "active agents in the development and maintenance of social capital at the level of the family and neighbourhood." While children 'inherit' or draw on the social networks of their families, the opposite is also true: the fewer connections children have within a neighbourhood, the less likely that parents and caregivers will establish connections with one other. This child-generated process of social cohesion is helped if the local social infrastructure is of a good standard. It is hindered when children need to leave their local community to attend school or use facilities beyond the neighbourhood, and when their activities in public spaces are criminalized or discouraged. (Weller and Bruegel 2009).

The social capital that Weller and Bruegel refer to is largely to what would be regarded by the social capital theorists as "bonding" capital. Another researcher, Catherine Campbell (2003) investigated the extent to which local community mobilisation can lead to a reduction in HIV transmission in a mining area in the North West province of South Africa. She describes bonding capital as important for its value in establishing strong relations of reciprocity and trust amongst peer groups and networks, and particularly amongst marginalized groups (for instance youth). This provides a starting point for identifying obstacles to developmental outcomes, and ways to overcome them, as well as for the development or "renegotiation" of identities, and the process of empowerment. However, Campbell warns that this is not enough. The generation of bridging capital (through alliances and partnerships that also transcend the boundaries of the local community) is essential for local groups to access support and resources (cited in Hall 2003).

Woolcock (1999, discussed in Hall 2003) emphasises that social capital is multi-dimensional – its "costs and benefits", to use the economic terminology, vary under

different circumstances. So, for instance, poor communities might possess some forms of social capital while they are lacking in others. The most likely scenario is that poor communities have strong horizontal ties (amongst members) but weak vertical ties (with institutions / access to outside agency). These dimensions are important because they bring in the issue of power relations. Is social capital more important for people (such as children) who have less of the other (human / physical) forms of capital? The literature indicates that “bonding” social capital through horizontal relations becomes a survival strategy in deprived environments where people have limited access to material resources. But “bridging” social capital is necessary for developmental progress. In this context, it would seem that building bridges and linkages is essential for shifting power relations away from isolation and dependency, towards a state of partnership where communities are agents in shaping and setting agendas, and have the collective efficacy to mobilise around an issue (Hall 2003).

In a sense, social capital is the perfect answer to poverty: it enables impoverished communities to overcome a lack of civic infrastructure and ‘get along’; it requires no initial expenditure of material resources, and its “stock” accumulates with use, rather than depreciating. Following numerous experimental ‘development’ initiatives (largely undertaken by the Social Capital Initiative project of the World Bank) there appears to be general agreement that social capital is not easily ‘created’ through external development interventions, policy or funding. On the other hand, development efforts can interfere with existing relations of cohesion and informal support networks. This is an important consideration in the context of low cost housing development, urban planning and expansion.

#### **5.4 Traversing space – routes between places**

*“In areas like transport planning, where technical priorities still regularly triumph over social concerns, vulnerable groups need particular attention and support.” (Porter and Abane 2008)*

Given the above discussions, it seems essential that we should develop an understanding of children's mobility within the broad environment in which they live. The “in-between” spaces are not only places of passage, but also places in which children meet, socialise and play – and in which they may be vulnerable.

Rooted in apartheid-era spatial engineering policies, the irony of the inherited public transport system was that it aimed to regulate and control the movement of people rather than to facilitate mobility. The Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) described the challenge of addressing existing transport systems in a democratic South Africa:

“The policy of apartheid has... burdened the workforce with enormous travel distances to their places of employment and commercial centres, and thus with excessive costs. Apartheid transport policy deprived the majority of people of a say in transport matters, and has led to the payment of huge travel subsidies, exposed commuters to vast walking distances and insecure rail travel; failed to regulate the kombi-taxi industry adequately, largely ignored the country's outrageous road safety record; paid little attention to the environmental impact of transport projects, and facilitated transport decision-making bodies that are unwieldy, unfocused, unaccountable and bureaucratic.” (cited in Cluver, Magasela et al. 2006)

An explicit focus of post-apartheid transport policy (and a main theme of the literature on transport) is on the role of roads and public transport systems in reducing urban poverty and rural deprivation. A key aim is to ensure that adults have access to employment opportunities (this is also an explicit aim of the national housing policy).

Transport does not feature directly in the Millennium Development Goals, but improvements to public transport infrastructure are essential to achieving the other MDGs. “If African countries are to meet the MDGs, it is clear that issues concerning children's mobility and transport will have to be addressed more directly. This requires both information on children's needs, and commitment from policy makers and practitioners to addressing them” (Porter and Abane 2008).

There is very little literature available that addresses the issue of *children's* transport specifically – the mechanisms and reasons for children's mobility within their environments, and issues of safety for children. Gina Porter, an anthropologist at Durham University, stands out as one of the few academic researchers whose work has focused on gender/child mobility and transport. She and co-author Albert Abane emphasise the lack of information about women's and children's mobility needs and experiences as being an obstacle to the development of transport policies and systems that cater for them:

“Although there is a growing literature dealing with gender issues in transport, mobility and accessibility and despite the emphasis on gender mainstreaming among donor agencies, only lip service is paid to women's transport needs within most transport ministry walls, whatever the externally directed rhetoric.... While women's interests are little served by transport ministries, those of their children are almost invisible. In part this can be ascribed to ignorance of children's needs and the significance of those needs for future development trajectories.... Remarkably little is known about children's current mobility patterns and use of transport in sub-Saharan Africa, and even less about their transport and mobility needs. Socio-spatial studies of child mobility in the continent are very rare, although there is a large published literature ... on related issues such as child labour ... education and child health.” (Porter and Abane 2008)

In their article, based on a study in Ghana where children participated as researchers in exploring other children's experience of travel, Porter and Abane emphasise that while transport research tends to be based on large-scale surveys, more localised qualitative work is necessary to understand children's spatial mobility and transport needs and practices. They draw attention to the need for participatory methods, despite the challenges these pose.

A study in Sweden (Berglund 2008) set out to record children's experience of space in ways that were meaningful both to children and planners, so that children could directly influence town planning. A methodology was developed in response to the question "how can children's perspectives be included in urban planning, and what kind of information can children communicate in a reliable and meaningful way to planners?" The answer was a GIS mapping system, which worked both as a research tool and a communication vehicle. Once they had been shown how the system worked, children (aged 10-12 years) needed little assistance in mapping their routes, marking special places and recording their activities and comments in relation to these places. Because computerised GIS maps are a common tool in spatial planning, the children's GIS maps were accessible to the adult planners, and so children were able to influence the planning process.

A local study, focusing on child and learner travel in Cape Town (Behrens 2004) finds that child travel constitutes a significant proportion of all local travel, and that there is an inverse relationship between household income and independent child mobility. The majority of children from high income households – even in their later teens – are accompanied (or driven) by an adult when they travel, whereas, from junior school age (6 years and over), the majority of low-income children travel independently of adults. Children in lower income households are heavily dependant on walking, while children in upper income households are more likely to travel in vehicles. An analysis of peak mobility times for children suggests that home-school trips are the most common types of trip undertaken by children. The study raises issues of road safety for children, pointing out that children account for a large proportion of pedestrian fatalities; data from 1997-1999 indicate that 19–33% of all pedestrian fatalities in the Cape Metropolitan Area were children aged 12 years or less, and 24–43% of fatalities involved children under 18 years. Children also accounted for a disproportionate number of pedestrian injuries: while the population distribution shows that children account for 35% of the population, 41–52% of pedestrian injuries were suffered by children under 17.

The policy frameworks and interventions to deal with child mobility and road safety are described as "somewhat disjointed". At the national level, the National Land Transport Transition Act (2000) assigns responsibility for the formulation of strategies

for learner transport to the provincial sphere of government, which is required to “set out a general strategy for the needs of learners and persons with disabilities” in its provincial land transport framework. Similar responsibilities are also assigned to local government, specifically “core cities” and certain other municipalities identified by the responsible provincial MEC. The Act defined “special categories of passengers” – these include learners, persons with disabilities, tourists, transferring long-distance passengers, the aged, pregnant women and those who are limited in their movements by children with or without pushchairs or prams” (Behrens 2004). Children, other than learners and young children who limit the movements of accompanying adults, are not identified as a special category of passenger. The national “Arrive Alive” campaign also identified learners as an important category for pedestrian safety. Strategies include the incorporation of road safety education modules in the mainstream education system, and national delivery of a reflective armband programme for schoolchildren. At the local level, municipal interventions around road and transport safety for children mainly take the form of traffic calming measures and pedestrian crossing facilities near schools.

Behrens’ analysis of national policies as well as provincial and local plans and strategies suggests that the focus is on “accommodating the travel needs of learners (as opposed to children more generally), primarily through the supply of public or school bus transport services. The available data on child and learner travel behaviour in Cape Town, however, suggests that public transport in fact accounts for a relatively minor share of mode split – suggesting perhaps that this policy emphasis, while not necessarily inappropriate, is misplaced. International practices include school-based initiatives (eg. walk-to-school or cycle-to-school days to encourage non-motorised modes and advocate for improved pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure), public authority-based initiatives (including school stagger times to increase safety and relieve congestion, or school zones, which involve decreased speed limits and increased speeding fines in areas around schools), as well as improvements to pedestrian and cycling infrastructure. While it may be helpful to apply such international innovations locally, there are important contextual considerations such as the greater danger to children due to the presence of gangs and child molesters, as well as driver aggression. Nevertheless, child transport considerations in urban areas may extend beyond motorised traffic options to non-motorised and cheaper forms of transport that are safe and allow independence of mobility.

## **5.5 Social infrastructure and services for children – issues of physical access**

Much of this section is drawn directly from Children Count, an ongoing project at the Children’s Institute, which analyses national household survey data to produce child-centred statistics. Amongst these are statistics on the distances which children must travel to reach schools and health services. Additional analyses have been undertaken

for this literature review, to look at physical access to other public facilities, and to explore the relationships between area type, housing type and the availability of resources for children.

### **5.5.1 Health care**

The health of children is influenced by many factors, including nutrition, access to clean water and adequate sanitation, adequate housing and a safe environment. Children need access to public health institutions such as clinics, which provide important preventative and curative services. In South Africa, where under-five mortality is estimated to be 57 per 1,000 live births – mainly from HIV/AIDS, diarrhoea, lower respiratory infection, low birth weight and malnutrition – increased access to clinics could substantially reduce the number of deaths.

Section 24 of the Constitution enshrines everyone's right "to have access to health care services". The Alma Ata agreement on health care provisioning stipulates that primary health care should be available (in sufficient supply), accessible (easily reached) affordable (or free for the poorest) and of good quality. These are principles to which South Africa has committed itself. From 1996, primary health care through the public service was made free to everyone in South Africa, thereby ensuring that basic health care should be affordable. However, the availability and physical accessibility of health care services remain a problem, particularly for people living in remote areas that are far from services and government institutions in general.

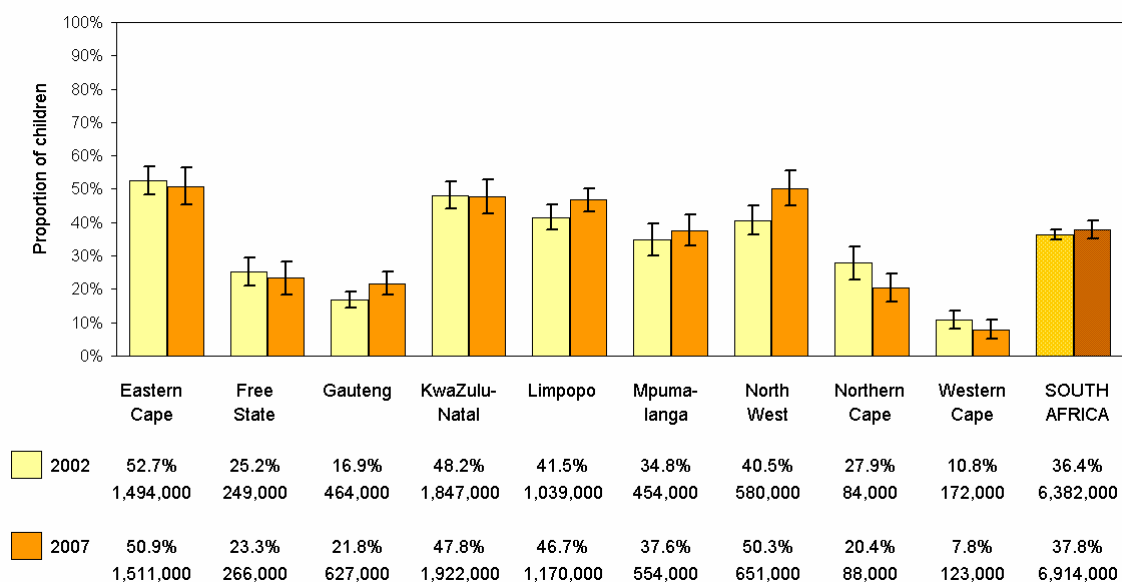
Physical inaccessibility poses particular challenges when it comes to health services, because the people who need these services are often unwell or injured, or need to be carried because they are too young, too old or too weak to walk. Physical inaccessibility can be related to distance, transport options and costs, or road infrastructure. Physical distance and poor roads also make it difficult for mobile clinics and emergency services to reach outlying areas." (Children's Institute 2008)

Distance is measured by proxy: time taken to reach the nearest clinic, by whatever form of transport would usually be used. The indicators distinguish between those children who would have to travel "far" (more than 30 minutes) to reach the nearest clinic, as opposed to those who have a health service facility within a 30-minute radius of their home.

The analyses show that large numbers of children have to travel long distances to reach basic resources which are essential to their health and development. The most recent data (derived from the General Household Survey of 2007) show that nearly seven million children (39%) do not have a primary health care service near to their home. Provincial disaggregation shows the variability in provisioning (Figure 1 below),

while longitudinal analysis over a 6-year period suggests that there has been little improvement in levels of access. If anything, the proportion of children living far from clinics has grown in Gauteng and the North West – possibly as a result of urban migration to informal areas with few services.

**Figure 1. Children living far from the nearest clinic, by province**



Source: Children Count: [www.childrencount.co.za](http://www.childrencount.co.za) (based on analysis of General Household Survey 2007)

It is not possible to disaggregate distance to clinic by urban / rural location since that variable has not been reported by the national statistics body, Statistics South Africa, since 2004. A poor proxy is to distinguish metropolitan and non-metropolitan areas (identified by the DC – District Council – variable in the national dataset). The six metropolitan areas are Cape Town, Durban, East Rand, Johannesburg, Port Elizabeth and Pretoria. Together, weighted populations in these areas account for 35% of the national population, and 28% of the child population (own analysis, General Household Survey 2007). Clearly, there is a larger urban population which is not included in this definition. Nevertheless the statistics confirm what we know intuitively: that children living in metropolitan areas have better access to health services than those in non-metro areas. While only 21% of children in metropolitan areas live in households where a trip to a clinic would take more than 30 minutes, 44% of children in non-metropolitan areas would have to travel far to reach the nearest clinic. There are similar discrepancies when distance to clinic is disaggregated by housing type: two-thirds (67%) of children living in “traditional” dwellings do not have a clinic within a 30-minute radius of their home, while only one third (33%) of children living in formal dwellings have to travel far. Interestingly, those living in informal housing appear to have the best levels of access: 26% would have a clinic within half an hour of their home. Only 2.6 million



children live in informal dwellings, compared with 3 million in traditional and 12 million in formal dwellings. Since government's response to the establishment of informal settlements is NOT to erect new clinics, this relative proximity is more likely to reflect the strategic way in which informal settlements are established: to be situated close to amenities.

The importance of accessible health care cannot be under-estimated – it is literally a matter of life and death. In a study undertaken as part of the Department of Social Development's "Social Policy Analysis" programme, researchers used the outcomes of qualitative research to derive a set of poverty/social exclusion indicators. These were then incorporated as a module in a nationally representative sample survey<sup>6</sup> in order to obtain a "democratic" definition of poverty and social exclusion. The module contained 56 questions – 37 about possessions, four about activities, nine about the neighbourhood and six about relationships with friends and family. These items were selected to relate to a range of different standards of living. Sampled participants were asked to respond in the same way for each item: to specify whether this item was "essential", "desirable" or "neither". Access to health care was ranked as the most important item in this module, with 91% of all respondents saying that it is essential to have "someone to look after you when you are very ill" (Cluver, Magasela et al. 2006). Qualitative findings emphasised the importance of access to health care services, and physical difficulties were described by both urban and rural participants. Not only are long distances a barrier to accessing health services; transport to reach services may be unaffordable for the poor, and emergency services are unavailable or too slow to reach remote areas, particularly those with poor access roads.

Hospitals are even less available, particularly to populations outside urban areas. Amongst children living outside metropolitan areas, 69% would have to travel over 30 minutes to reach the nearest hospital, and 23% would have to travel more than an hour (own analyses based on General Household Survey 2007). Clearly, the provision of service infrastructure, decent roads and safe, affordable public transport is critical for children's right to health care to be realised.

### **5.5.2 *Environmental health***

Environmental issues are an important consideration for child health. A quarter (24%) of children in South Africa live in households which report waste removal and litter as a problem, while 20% live in households with concerns about contaminated water and 15% where air pollution is reported as a problem (own analysis, based on General Household Survey 2007).

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<sup>6</sup> The 2005 South African Social Attitudes Survey (SASAS), undertaken by the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC)

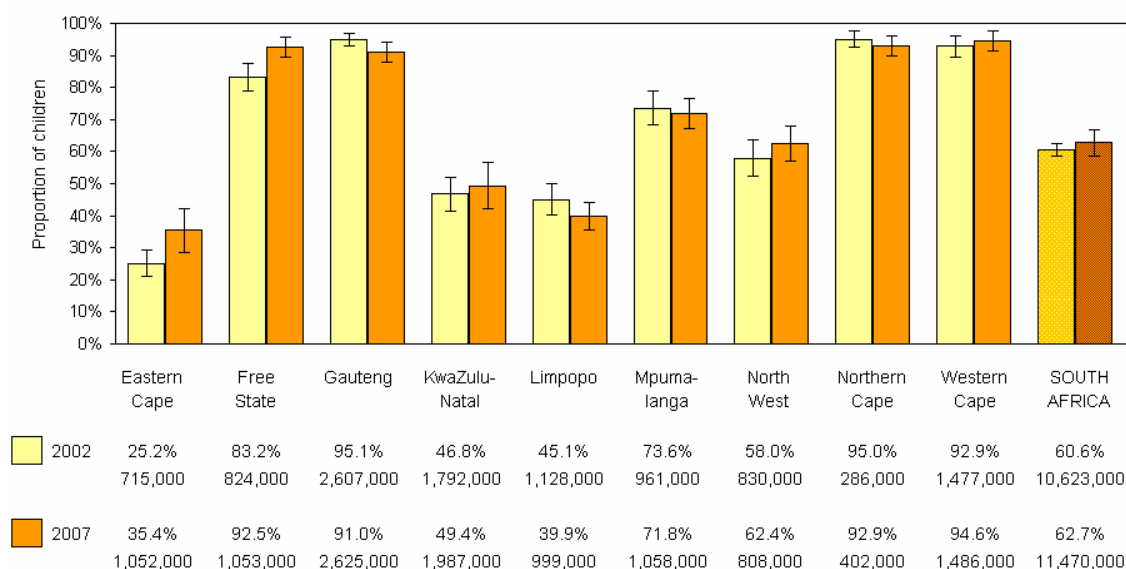
Environmental health includes regular and affordable access to adequate basic services. The Children's Institute monitors the provision of adequate water and sanitation from a child-centred perspective, through its Children Count project.

Clean water is essential for human survival. The World Health Organisation has defined the minimum quantity of water needed for survival as 20 litres per person per day. This includes water for drinking, cooking and personal hygiene. This water needs to be supplied close to the home, as households that travel long distances to collect water often struggle to meet their basic daily quota. This can compromise children's health and hygiene.

Young children are particularly vulnerable to diseases associated with poor water quality. Gastro-intestinal infections with associated diarrhoea and dehydration are a significant contributor to the high child mortality rate in South Africa, and recent outbreaks of cholera in some provinces pose a serious threat to children in those areas. Lack of access to adequate water is closely related to poor sanitation and hygiene. In addition, children may be responsible for fetching and carrying water to their homes from communal taps, or rivers and streams.

It is of concern, then, that as many as seven million children live in households without access to clean drinking water on site. In 2007 around three-quarters (73%) of adults lived in households with drinking water on site – a significantly higher proportion than children (63%). A year-on-year comparison from 2002 to 2007 suggests that there has been little improvement in children's access to water over the six-year period.... (Children's Institute 2008).

**Figure 2. Children living in households with clean water on site, 2002 & 2007**



Source: Children Count: [www.childrencount.ci.org.za](http://www.childrencount.ci.org.za) (based on analysis of General Household Survey 2007)

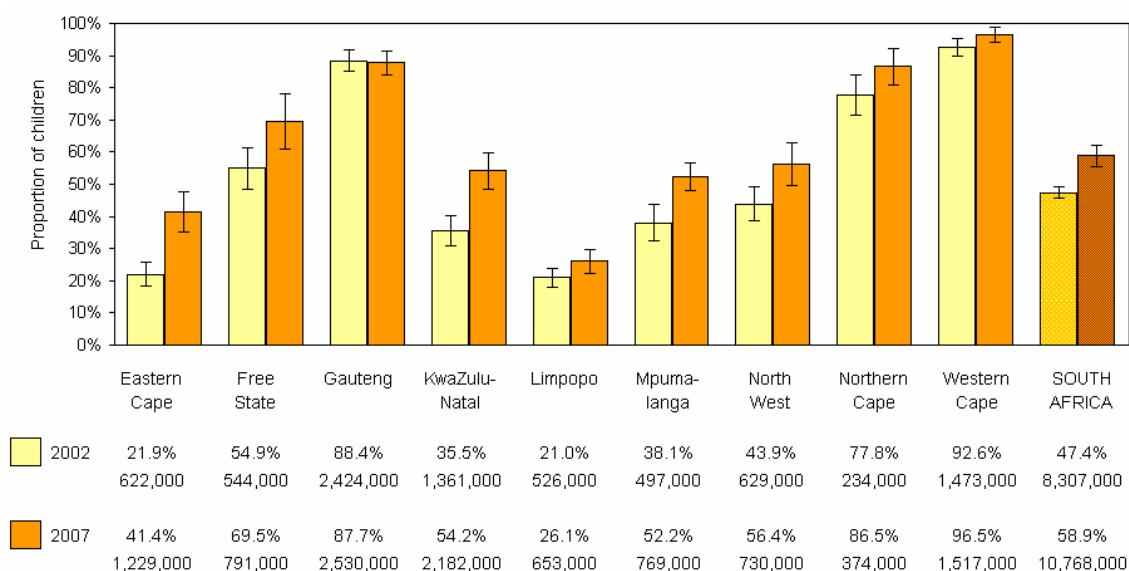
Figure 2 above shows that there has been little improvement in water provision for children over a six-year period. It also illustrates the provincial variation in children's access to adequate water, with the most rural provinces – the Eastern Cape, Limpopo and KwaZulu Natal significantly below the national average. Service provision is, of course, determined largely by the type of area in which people live. Informal settlements are often inadequately serviced, particularly if they are on undemarcated land, new or rapidly expanding. Many rural villages have no municipal service infrastructure. A quarter of children living in formal housing do not have access to clean water on site, while the proportion increases to a third of children living in informal dwellings (this includes dwellings on formal sites, such as backyard shacks). Only 15% of children living in traditional dwellings have access to clean water on site – the remaining 85% need to walk to collect water from communal taps or natural sources. Over 10% – nearly two million children – live in households that are dependant on streams, springs or stagnant pools for their water supply. By contrast, only 6% of adults live in households dependant on natural and potentially unsafe water sources, and adults are significantly more likely than children to have a safe water source in their dwelling or on site. The vast majority of children living in 'traditional' dwellings are African, and so we see pronounced racial inequality in access to water. Just 56% of African children had clean water on site in 2007, while over 90% of all other race groups had clean drinking water at home. Collecting water is usually the work of women and children, and it can put people at personal risk, as well as being time consuming, impacting on other activities such as education and recreation.

Adequate sanitation includes flush toilets and ventilated pit latrines that dispose of waste safely and are within or near a house. Inadequate sanitation includes pit latrines that are not ventilated, chemical toilets, bucket toilets, or no toilets at all. South Africa did not meet its goal to eradicate the bucket system by 2007. In that year, 11% of all children (2 million children) still had no toilet facilities for their households and were forced to use buckets or the open veld.

Good sanitation is essential for safe and healthy childhoods. It is very difficult to maintain good hygiene without water and toilets. Poor sanitation is associated with diarrhoea, cholera, malaria, bilharzia, worm infestations, eye infections and skin disease. These illnesses compromise children's nutritional status. Using public toilets and the open veld can also put children in physical danger. The use of the open veld and bucket toilets is also likely to have consequences for water quality in the area and to contribute to the spread of disease. Poor sanitation undermines children's health, safety and dignity. (Children's Institute 2008)

Figure 3 below shows the provincial disparity in sanitation provision for children, and also shows some improvement in the worst served provinces.

**Figure 3. Children living in households with adequate sanitation, 2002 & 2007**



Source: Children Count: [www.childrencount.ci.org.za](http://www.childrencount.ci.org.za) (based on analysis of General Household Survey 2007)

As with other measures of living environments, it is important to note that children are significantly more likely than adults to live in households without access to adequate sanitation. This is due to the distribution of children, who are disproportionately represented in rural areas (proxied by metropolitan area type and traditional housing).

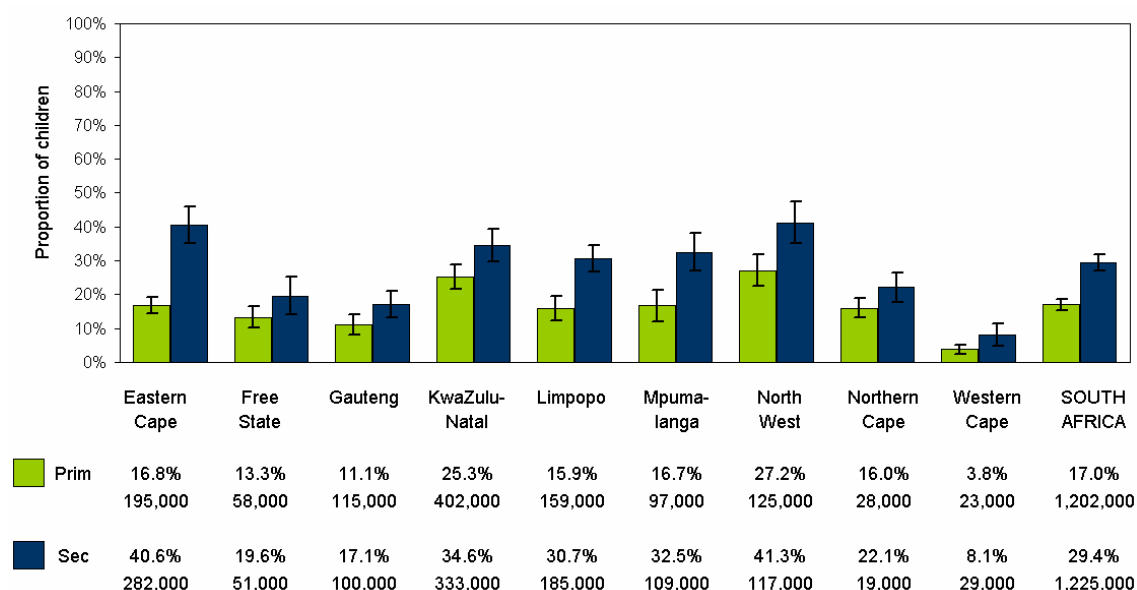
### 5.5.3 Education

Education provides the basis for life-long learning, skills development and preparation for economic participation in adulthood, and is crucial children's development and for breaking intergenerational cycles of poverty. The school attendance rate is generally regarded as a good indicator of whether the state is meeting its minimum core obligation to provide education services so that children can realise their right to education. Where schools are not easily accessible, attendance rates may equally reflect the determination and effort of children (and their caregivers) to ensure that they get to school, despite under-provisioning. South African household data show that attendance rates are remarkably high (around 96%), given that over a fifth of all children do not have a school near to their home.

In the Children Count project, distance to school is calculated similarly to health care services – where “far” is defined as being more than 30 minutes away for primary school age children (distance to the nearest primary school) and high school-age children (distance to the nearest secondary school).

Over 2.4 million school-age children have to travel long distances – over half an hour – to school each day, assuming they attend the school closest to their home.

**Figure 4. Children living far from the nearest [primary or secondary] school, by province, 2007**



Source: Children Count: [www.childrencount.ci.org.za](http://www.childrencount.ci.org.za) (based on analysis of General Household Survey 2007)

As with access to health care, there is a large and significant difference in school access between children living in metropolitan areas and those living outside of metro areas. While 15% of metropolitan children travel far to reach the nearest school, 35% of school-age children in non-metro areas must travel far. Half of children living in ‘traditional’ dwellings (51%) do not have a school within half-an-hour of their home, while a quarter of children in formal and informal dwellings (23–25%) must travel far.

A Children’s Institute study on targeting, *The Means to Live*, was undertaken in two sites – one urban and one rural. The rural site includes three small villages in the Eastern Cape province, which are severely under-resourced in terms of physical and social infrastructure. There are no clinics or high schools in any of the villages, and the fact of their remoteness and the poor access roads was in itself an obstacle to school access. Most of the teachers are not local residents, but come from the nearest town, Butterworth. During the rainy season, the dirt roads become virtually impassable, and it can be extremely difficult to get through.

Access to school is not only a problem for teachers. Most of the high school learners attend a secondary school in a village two hill-tops away. This entails crossing a river on stepping stones, since there is no bridge. Pupils have lost many books in the water, their uniforms get wet, and when the rains are heavy children lose days of school at a time because they cannot get through. Planners at the district municipality had no knowledge of the need for a bridge until this was raised by researchers.

There are other dangers on the way to and from school – girls are at risk of being harassed and there have been cases of rape. Boys have been attacked by other boys en route. This is the devastating manifestation of what is described as a recent increase in violent crime, particularly between adolescent boys. (Hall, Leatt et al. Forthcoming)

*No one can walk on foot in the time that we live in. It's an out of sight place you have to go, down valleys and whatever... We would also like a school... the government should try to build a high school for us...*

*To agree with this, the children are getting raped. These schools are far, as you can see... the school that the children from this area attend is that one over there beyond that tarred road you see there on top, they walk from here on foot. If you do not have money to pay for transport you just prefer to let the child stay at home and quit school because it's likely that the child might not come back from that school, maybe she got raped or stabbed in that area between the fields. (Caregivers, Nkelekethe, The Means to Live)*

#### **5.5.4 Safety and security**

There are two main ways to address issues of security and crime. One is to wage “war on crime” while another is to address underlying issues of inequality, class division, social fragmentation and mistrust. South Africa continues to face many challenges to improving safety and security, including high crime rates, an under-capacitated police force, police corruption and unreported crime. Crime against children is exceptionally high, and a recent spate of child murders and rapes has left the Western Cape in a state of shock. Nearly 450 children remain “missing” in that province.

In the Department of Social Development research on poverty and social exclusion, undertaken by the Centre for the Analysis of South African Social Policy (CASASP), safety and security emerged as a key issue for focus groups. “Fear of crime was perceived as directly impacting on social inclusion”, with people reporting that they were becoming less inclined to leave the safety of their homes, or to allow children out on their own (Cluver, Magasela et al. 2006). The common response to crime – by both residents and government – is to increase security and ‘clamp down’ on criminals through better and more visible policing and harsher punishment. This is in contrast to innovations in the Columbian city of Medellin (see section 9 below) where the police, although visible, were disarmed, and the focus was on opening up public spaces,

creating more visibility by taking down walls, and building symbolic links (literally bridges) between areas of conflict, rather than securing areas and entrenching separation between rich and poor.

## **5.6 Creating 'safe' recreational spaces for children**

It is important for children to have access to safe spaces outside of the institutions of home, school and other formal facilities. But it may not be ideal for these spaces to be modelled on institutionalized environments that are restrictive, particularly if the provision of facilities obscures the need for safe and 'child-friendly' neighbourhoods. Indeed, "safety" is often conflated with containment or regulation, resulting in restrictions that suppress creative use of space – and do not contribute to social relations or neighbourliness.

Many developed countries have approached the 'problem' of how to contain children's free-time activities by circumscribing the physical spaces in which these take place – for instance, through the creation of formal after-care or institutionalized youth recreation centres – and so remove children from the public eye (Malone 2002; Rasmussen 2004).

Recreational facilities may be viewed externally (by adults) as places of safety and freedom, which nurture children's interests and development, but children themselves offer a different perspective. Similar in many ways to school and home, recreational environments are experienced as places of control, physically bounded and separated from the 'outside' world, in which children are counted and accounted for, where 'collective' use limits privacy, where adult supervision is the norm and where, despite the nominal 'freedoms', activities are circumscribed by rules and resource limitations (Travlou 2003; Rasmussen 2004). In addition, formalized spaces, when developed on a large scale, can take on a uniformity that limits the degree to which the space can be personalized by individuals – this is particularly the case in schools, but is also found in recreation centres. Thus what many recreation centres offer is 'paradoxical leisure-time' (Rasmussen 2004) – since free time spent in an institutional context is not experienced as 'free'.

An example of the development of designated recreational place in Australia relegated youth to the periphery of public space. Not only did this mean that public services and amenities (such as toilets, lighting, health facilities) were lacking, it also removed young people from the natural surveillance and general activity of their neighbourhoods.

"What the 'not seen and not heard' strategy fails to address is the attractiveness of shared community space for young people, who do not want to be excluded

or be invisible in the everyday life of their cities. The vibrancy of community public space provides young people with a variety of important elements, including and opportunity to observe and engage in the social and cultural capital of their communities, to learn skills of social negotiation and conflict resolution, to try out new social identities and for there to be the safety and security necessary to do all these things.” (Malone 2002)

The ‘protection’ of recreational areas need not be through the establishment of physical boundaries which keep children in and others out. Protection is partly about surveillance – for instance, where small children play close to their homes so that they are within sight of their mothers and neighbours. Rather than relying on demarcated playgrounds as the solution, there are strong arguments to improve the places where children already play – for instance, by putting up speed bumps, plant trees, getting rid of waste (Granberg and Olofsson 2006).

With the exception of commercialized after-care and recreational facilities serving middle-class areas, the idea of formalized after-school space is relatively new in South Africa, but is taking hold through the idea of partial care facilities, and there is increasing reference to recreational youth centres as general resources for children outside of school hours. The new Children’s Act provides for partial care and early childhood development (ECD) facilities, including after-school supervision and partial care for children of all ages. Drop in centres, provided for in chapter 14, are conceptualized more as places of service access, where “vulnerable children can ‘drop in’ during the day or night for, among others, basic services including food, school attendance support, personal hygiene such as baths and showers, and laundry services” (Budlender and Proudlock 2009). All of these fall under the Department of Social Development’s budget for child care and protection, while ECD at pre-school (Grade R) level falls under the Department of Education. However, beyond institutional arrangements is a need for integrated spatial planning so that children’s own living environments are safe and conducive for socialising and recreation. In the context of urbanisation, poor living environments and difficulties in actualising the goal of integrated planning, this presents enormous challenges.

These challenges are not unique to South Africa. Sudeshna Chatterjee writes of the challenges of (and need for) planning and urban design to realize adequate housing and integrated recreation space for poor children in South Asia, where urban migration and expansion and the prevalence on under-serviced informal settlements undermines the spatial needs of children for recreation:

“It is difficult to focus upon habitats that include children’s play and recreation spaces without understanding the urbanization processes. The suburbs of cities are increasingly catering to the new migrant populations who cannot access the city centres. Additionally, relocated populations from evicted squatter



settlements and unplanned expansion of small and medium polluting industries put pressure on land. These suburbs are poorly serviced with water, sanitation, transport, schools and essential civic amenities.” (Chatterjee 2002)

Juxtaposed to the model of securing or separating off spaces for children is the reorientation and opening up of public space, as seen in the Colombian city of Medellin, where innovative social policy and urban renewal strategies included a emphasis on excellent service delivery to poor areas, safe and efficient public transport systems and the development of safe and attractive public spaces for all age groups.

Chatterjee argues that in the context of mass housing projects (such as those in South Asia and South Africa) the absence of suitable housing finance policies [or space] for incremental improvements means that adequate habitability for children is compromised – for instance in respect of privacy and play space.

“In such a scenario, the public spaces at the community level such as parks, libraries, schools, day care centres, markets, youth clubs, community centres, hospitals, playgrounds and incidental open spaces, should be made available for children's recreation.” (Chatterjee 2002)

A proposed model outlined by Chatterjee incorporates both closed (bounded) and open (flexible) spaces for children to meet, play and socialise: First, she proposes the creation of “*secure territories*” at different levels of the community plan. Cores around which these can be generated at the housing level include Houses, community toilets, schools, day care centres, shops, cultural institutions, sports facilities and clubs. This requires a special design focus at the thresholds of dwellings, the spaces in front of dwellings, community streets, left over open spaces, terraces and parking – all of which should be planned and designed to have natural surveillance of many care taking adults. Second is the creation of “*games territories*” for active games. These are more clearly defined functional areas with cores including streets, courts, terraces, open spaces of different categories and adjacencies, wastelands, dumps and neighbourhood parks. Design considerations and controls include securing access to areas, for instance through pedestrian links, and ensuring the environmental safety of the facilities. Third, “*socio-petal*” territories are important for bringing together different age groups for different purposes. These include supply cores (eg. shops, markets, bus and other transport stands; festival cores (eg. precincts of religious buildings, community centres and parks); cores supporting meeting and information (pedestrian zones, parks and other open spaces that are personal spaces for interaction); and cores supporting recreational needs (which are variable, being culture- age- and gender-specific, but could be catered for through greening projects and parks, clubs, multipurpose halls and pedestrian or low-traffic streets). (Chatterjee 2002)

Many of the environmental factors that are considered risky or inappropriate for children, are risky and inappropriate for everybody. Thus the notion of “child-friendly cities” is rooted in the assertion that a city that is child-friendly is a city “fit for all”.

## 6 Children's right to an adequate environment

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*“Child rights programming means using the principles of child rights to plan, implement and monitor programmes with the overall goal of improving the position of children so that all boys and girls can fully enjoy their rights and can live in societies that acknowledge and respect children's rights.” (Save the Children undated)*

*“The link between human dignity and social and economic rights, and by extension a quality living environment in line with the commitment to improve the quality of life of all South Africans, has been argued by commentators on the South African Constitution. In the words of former Chief Justice of the Constitutional Court, ‘South Africa's socio-economic rights in the Bill of Rights are rooted in respect for human dignity... for how can there be dignity in a life lived without access to housing, health care, food, water or in the case of person's unable to support themselves, without appropriate assistance?’” (Cluver, Magasela et al. 2006)*

### 6.1 Rights framework: an adequate environment

The right to adequate living conditions is long-established in international law. The Universal Declaration on Human Rights of 1948 included the right of everyone to a standard of living adequate for the health and wellbeing of himself and of his family, including ...housing ...” (Article 25). South Africa is signatory to a number of conventions and international agreements, and the Constitution, strongly influenced by the Convention on the Rights of the Child, includes a special section in the Bill of Rights dedicated to the rights of children.

#### 6.1.1 The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) was adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1989 and quickly ratified by most member States, including the new democratic South African government in 1995, and holds the record for being “the most universally accepted human rights instrument in history” – ratified by 192 countries (representing all member states except Somalia and the US) (Centre on Housing Rights and Evictions 2006). The CRC contains 54 articles, divided into three parts. The first 41 articles, contained in part 1, deal with the content of children's rights under the convention. Those directly related to issues of living environments, spatial

planning and service delivery are summarized below (key words and phrases are emphasized in bold by the author):

#### **UN Convention on the Rights of the Child**

- Article 3:** In all actions concerning children... the **best interests** of the child shall be a primary consideration. States Parties undertake to ensure the child such protection and care as is necessary for his or her well-being.
- Article 5:** States Parties shall **respect the responsibilities, rights and duties of parents** or, where applicable, the members of the extended family or community as provided for by local custom, legal guardians or other persons legally responsible for the child.
- Article 6:** ... States Parties shall ensure to the maximum extent possible the **survival and development of the child...**
- Article 8:** States Parties undertake to respect the right of the child to preserve his or her identity, including nationality, name and **family relations** as recognized by law without unlawful interference
- Article 9:** States Parties shall ensure that a child shall **not be separated from his or her parents against their will**, except when competent authorities subject to judicial review determine, in accordance with applicable law and procedures, that such separation is necessary for the best interests of the child
- Article 12:** States Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her views the right to **express those views freely in all matters affecting the child**, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.
- Article 16:** No child shall be subjected to **arbitrary or unlawful interference with his or her privacy, family, home...**
- Article 18:** For the purposes of guaranteeing and promoting the rights set forth in the present Convention, States Parties shall **render appropriate assistance to parents** and legal guardians in the performance of their child-rearing responsibilities and shall ensure the development of **institutions, facilities and services for the care of children.**
- Article 19:** States Parties shall take all appropriate legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to **protect the child from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse**, while in the care of parent(s), legal guardian(s) or any other person who has the care of the child...
- Article 20:** A child temporarily or permanently deprived of his or her family environment, or in whose own best interests cannot be allowed to remain that environment, shall be entitled to **special protection and assistance** provided by the State...
- Article 22:** ... a child who is seeking refugee status or who is considered a refugee in accordance with applicable international or domestic law and procedures shall, whether unaccompanied or accompanied by his or her parents or by any other person, receive **appropriate protection and humanitarian assistance** in the enjoyment of applicable rights set forth in the present Convention and in other international human rights or humanitarian instruments..

<b>Article 23:</b>	States Parties recognise that a mentally or physically disabled child should enjoy a <b>full and decent life, in conditions which ensure dignity, promote self-reliance and facilitate the child's active participation</b> in the community....
<b>Article 24:</b>	States Parties recognize the right of the child to the enjoyment of the <b>highest attainable standard of health</b> and to <b>facilities</b> for the treatment of illness and rehabilitation of health... and shall pursue full implementation of this right and... take appropriate measures:  (a) To <b>diminish infant and child mortality</b> ;  (b) To ensure the provision of necessary medical assistance and <b>health care</b> to all children with emphasis on the development of primary health care;  (c) To combat disease and malnutrition, including ... through the provision of <b>adequate nutritious foods and clean drinking-water, taking into consideration the dangers and risks of environmental pollution</b> ;
<b>Article 27:</b>	States Parties recognise the right of every child to a <b>standard of living adequate for the child's physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development</b> .... States Parties, in accordance with national conditions and within their means, shall take appropriate measures to assist parents and others responsible for the child to implement this right and shall in case of need provide material assistance and support programmes, particularly with regard to nutrition, clothing and housing....
<b>Article 28:</b>	States Parties recognise the <b>right of the child to education</b> and with a view to achieving this right progressively and on the basis of equal opportunity, they shall... (a) Make primary education compulsory and available free to all; (b) Encourage the development of different forms of secondary education, including general and vocational education, make them available and accessible to every child, and take appropriate measures such as the introduction of free education and offering financial assistance in case of need
<b>Article 31:</b>	States Parties recognise the <b>right of the child to rest and leisure</b> , to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts...
(Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights 1989)	

Four guiding principles run through the CRC:

- The right to non-discrimination (Article 2), which applies by extension to the child's family
- The best interests of the child – which is central to the development of children's human rights under international law and is a critical consideration for policy-makers in the context of human settlement planning.
- The right to survival and maximum development – which has implications for integrated service delivery, housing, environmental health, adequate health services and education, as well as the social context of neighbourhoods.
- Participation – as expressed in Article 12: the right of children to have their views heard and respected in all matters that affect them; Article 13: freedom of expression and information; Article 14: freedom of thought, conscience

and religion; and Article 15: and the right of and association and peaceful assembly.

The theme of participation, highlighted throughout the CRC is a “radical and critical departure from the passive role usually ascribed to children in society” (Centre on Housing Rights and Evictions 2006), and much of the Child-friendly Cities discourse is an exploration of how to enable child participation in practice.

The “best interests of the child” principle is broad in scope and applies to budgeting, legislation and government administration, as clarified by the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, which stated:

Every legislative, administrative and judicial body or institution is required to apply the best interests principle by systematically considering how children's rights and interests are or will be affected by their decisions and actions – by, for example, a proposed or existing law or policy or administrative action or court decision, including those which are directly concerned with children but indirectly affect children. (General Comment 5)

Many of the articles contained in the CRC refer to the role of family in children's lives. Children have a right to parental or other family care (article 5), to family relations (article 8) and not to be separated from their family against their will (article 9). These have relevance in South Africa, where families are often divided as a result of apartheid spatial planning and a history of influx control, adult urban labour migration, housing shortages in cities and other factors.

The CRC places a responsibility on parents or caregivers to implement children's right to an adequate standard of living. This duty is shared between caregivers and the State in that Article 27 obliges the State to “take appropriate measures to assist parents and others responsible for the child” and, where necessary, to provide material assistance and support programmes “particularly with regard to nutrition, clothing and housing”.

The imperative to ‘fulfill’ rights places two distinct obligations on the state: firstly, a facilitative role, where states ‘must adopt appropriate legislative, administrative, budgetary, judicial, promotion and other measures towards the full realization of the right’, and second, direct provision or delivery, where states ‘must directly provide assistance or services for the realization of these rights’ (Save the Children undated)

### 6.1.2 *Other international agreements*

Article 20 of the *African Convention on the Rights and Welfare of the Child* (ACRWC), similarly places a concurrent duty on parents and the State: while parents have primary responsibility for providing a suitable living environment for their children, while the State must “assist parents and other persons responsible for the child and in case of need provide material assistance and support programmes particularly with regard to ... housing”. In addition, the ACRWC specifies that States Parties shall, in accordance with their means, undertake all appropriate measures “to ensure that the children of working parents are provided with care services.” There is an obvious catch-22 here, in that the high unemployment rate in South Africa means that many parents do not have work, and it is difficult for mothers in particular to spend time seeking work or trying to establish small businesses while also caring for children. At present, there are few crèches serving poor neighbourhoods, and those that exist are almost entirely private. The ACRWC is a regional treaty that was ratified by South Africa in 2000, and is therefore binding.

The *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights* (ICESCR) of 1966 was signed by South Africa in 1994 but has not yet been ratified. Article 11 of the ICESCR recognises the right of everyone to an adequate standard of living, and general comment no. 4 (1991) identifies key aspects of adequate housing, including legal security of tenure, the provision of services and infrastructure, habitability, accessibility, and access to employment and facilities.

*Agenda 21* (adopted by South Africa) is the program of Action from the UN Conference on Environment and Development 1992, and codifies principles of sustainable development. It contains, in Article 7.9(c), an important declaration regarding state support to housing efforts: “All countries should, as appropriate, support the shelter efforts of the urban and rural poor, the unemployed and the no-income group by adopting and/or adapting existing codes and regulations, to facilitate their access to land, finance and low-cost building materials and by actively promoting the regularization and upgrading of informal settlement and urban slums as an expedient measure and pragmatic solution to the urban shelter deficit.” (United Nations 2002)

The *Habitat Agenda* (adopted by South Africa) came out of the UN conference on Declaration on Cities and other Human settlements 1996. It contains over 100 commitments on human settlement issues, including a commitment to “improve living and working conditions on an equitable and sustainable basis, so that everyone will have adequate shelter that is healthy, safe, secure, accessible, affordable, and that includes basic services, families and amenities and will enjoy freedom from discrimination in housing and legal security of tenure.”

### 6.1.3 *The South African Constitution*

Section 26 of the South African Constitution entrenches the right to housing for all, and compels the state to take positive action (to achieve the progressive realization) as well as negative duties (to refrain from or prevent eviction) to ensure that this right is realized:

- (1) Everyone has the right to have access to adequate housing.
- (2) The state must take reasonable legislative and other measures, within its available resources, to achieve the progressive realisation of this right.
- (3) No one may be evicted from their home, or have their home demolished, without an order of court made after considering all the relevant circumstances. No legislation may permit arbitrary evictions.

In addition to the general right of access to adequate housing, children are given a special right to shelter in Section 28 of the Bill of Rights:

- (1) Every child has the right...
  - (c) to basic nutrition, *shelter*, basic health care services and social services [emphasis added]

The distinction between the general and child-specific rights in the Constitution has been the subject of some dispute. While the State is obliged to “respect, protect, promote and fulfil” all socio-economic rights, the general right of access to adequate housing is, like most other general socio-economic rights, subject to limitations (it may be progressively realisation, within the constraints of the state’s available resources). Children’s basic rights in Section 28 are not subject to such qualifications. In addition, children’s right to shelter is a direct ‘right to’ – suggesting that the right imposes stronger obligations on the State than the general ‘right to have access to’ housing (Proudlock 2002). While the former implies immediate provision of shelter, the latter suggests mechanisms to promote access – a facilitative approach more in keeping with the requirement to make adequate housing available on a progressive basis (Hall 2005).

Other socio-economic rights specified for children in the Constitution are the right to basic nutrition and basic health care services (s.28(1)(c)). In addition, children have a right to social services (2.28(1)(c)) and to protection from maltreatment, neglect, abuse, degradation, and exploitative, inappropriate or harmful labour practices (s.28(1)(d-g)). As with the CRC, all of this is underscored with the principle that “a child’s best interests are of paramount importance in every matter concerning the child” (s.28(2)).

The rights of children are mutually reinforcing, inter-dependant and indivisible. For instance, housing / shelter, while important in its own right, may be seen as instrumental in establishing households within specific locations that in turn enable access to a range of other services and social infrastructure to realise children’s rights. There are inherent connections, for instance, between the right to housing and the rights to education,

health, nutrition, water and recreation. Conversely, an adequate environment, conducive to children's survival and development, is about more than housing or shelter.

## 6.2 Adequate housing as the basis of the right to an adequate environment

*“Many children's rights are rooted in the fundamental human right to decent, secure, affordable housing. Survival, health and optimal development are related to the quality of housing and its surroundings; access to livelihoods, schooling and other services are determined by its location; emotional security, family stability and even the quality of community relations are tied to security of tenure. But the urban poor struggle with housing – getting it, keeping it and coping with its inadequacies.” (Innocenti Research Centre 2002)*

*“Adequate housing fosters family integration, contributes to social equity and strengthens the feeling of belonging, security and human solidarity, which are essential for the well-being of children” (UN Declaration: A World Fit for Children)*

In South Africa, the right of access to adequate housing is modelled on the right to housing in Article 11 (1) of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), which provides that the State has a duty to recognise the right of everyone to adequate housing.

The International Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CECSR), in a general comment, identified seven key elements which need to be assessed to measure whether housing is 'adequate':

**1) Security of tenure:** Families need to have the peace of mind that their homes are secure and cannot be taken away from them without a legal process that ensures that their rights are protected. Laws that protect against unfair evictions must therefore be passed and enforced. In South Africa, there are a range of policies and laws providing for this protection. The most frequently used is the *Prevention of Illegal Eviction from and Unlawful Occupation of Land Act of 1998*, better known as “PIE”.

**2) Access to services:** The concept of 'adequate housing' includes access to safe water, sanitation, safe energy sources (e.g. electricity connection in the house), and refuse removal.

**3) Affordability:** People must be able to afford to buy, build or rent a house. The State needs to design a range of policies, laws and programmes aimed at ensuring that housing is affordable to all people. This includes providing financial assistance to people who do not have adequate income, and passing and enforcing laws aimed at preventing high rentals being charged.

**4) Habitability:** Houses must have enough space to prevent overcrowding. They must also be built in a way that ensures they are physically safe and protect the inhabitants against the weather, especially the rain and cold.



**5) Accessibility:** Housing must be accessible to all people and this means that housing policies, laws and programmes must make special provision for vulnerable groups such as the very poor, including the homeless, people with disabilities, people living with HIV, women, children and old people.

**6) Location:** Houses must be situated in areas close to work opportunities, clinics, police stations, schools and child-care facilities.

**7) Culturally adequate:** Houses should reflect people's cultural identity. If the State builds houses that are not culturally appropriate, it can distort family structure and child-caring practices, which can have a negative effect on children.

(Proudlock & Hall in Children's Institute 2008)

This section draws extensively on a policy review by Hall, undertaken for the Means to Live project, conducted by the Children's Institute at UCT. The review outlines the rights and policy framework for delivering adequate housing, which in turn may provide a basis for gaining access to local resources and delivery of services. The main programme for housing delivery to the millions of people without adequate housing is the housing subsidy scheme. The policy review and considers the effectiveness of the targeting mechanism – both in its conceptualization and in implementation – from the perspective of children (Hall 2005).

The distinction between “shelter” and “adequate housing” in the South African Constitution is of interest because of the different qualities of housing they imply. While shelter has been described by some as being the part of a “minimum core”, in other words, a basic form of housing sufficient for survival, the meaning of “adequate housing” is outlined in a number of policy documents, including the Housing White Paper, the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) and the National Housing Code.

The RDP, which first outlined the new government's policy undertakings endorsed the right of every South African to live in peace and dignity in a secure place, and placed the ultimate responsibility on the democratic government for ensuring that housing is provided to all (Hall 2005). The 1994 Housing White Paper further outlined the “adequate housing” standard as follows:

“Housing is defined as a variety of processes through which habitable, stable and sustainable public and private residential environments are created for viable households and communities. This recognises that the environment within which a house is situated is as important as the house itself in satisfying the needs and requirements of the occupants. Government strives for the establishment of viable, socially and economically integrated communities, situated in areas allowing

convenient access to economic opportunities and well as health, education and social amenities, within which all South Africa's people will have access to:

- a permanent residential structure with secure tenure, ensuring privacy and providing adequate protection against the elements;
- potable water, adequate sanitary facilities including waste disposal and domestic electricity supply."

The main features of "adequate" housing envisaged for South Africa therefore include:

- housing as a "process", rather than a product
- the establishment of "viable" communities
- good location – access to economic opportunities
- access to public amenities (health, education, etc.)
- a finished housing product (formal top-structure)
- security of tenure (which, particularly in the context of the national housing subsidy scheme, has mainly taken the form of ownership)
- provision of basic services

Chapter 2 of the National Housing Code similarly defines "adequate" as being "measured by legal security of tenure, the availability of services; materials, facilities and infrastructure; affordability; habitability; accessibility; location; and cultural adequacy". In other words, adequate housing is not just about the quality of shelter, but about a range of qualitative aspects related to housing, including the provision of services, location and access to facilities, and secure tenure (with a range of tenure and housing options). All of this should theoretically be within the reach of even the poorest households.

The Department of Housing's latest over-arching policy document, "Breaking New Ground" (2004), emphasises the promotion of sustainable human settlements (as opposed to simply 'housing') – and makes an explicit commitment to housing projects and developments that are socially inclusive and integrated.

Chatterjee (2002) proposes a framework for thinking about urban design and the structuring of space, drawing on research about and with children in India. The eight-point list includes elements that make the connection between aesthetics and functionality:

1. the creation of *Environmental Diversity* at different levels within the home-range of the child (for instance, through diverse activity cores such as schools, shops and play areas, as well as diverse textures and building styles)

2. providing ***Identity*** to zones of adequate housing (for instance, through pedestrian precincts and landscaped open spaces that can be maintained locally)
3. achieving ***Legibility*** in a housing area (for instance through reinforced pathways, a clearly-defined hierarchy of roads and paths, and the establishment of visual landmarks)
4. imparting ***Character*** to a neighbourhood (by involving residents in design and construction, and achieving a density that will ensure good use of open space)
5. creating ***Flexibility*** in the environment (for instance having alternate routes for better exploration, and good interface between the built and natural environment)
6. achieving proper ***Scale*** in the built environment (for instance to ensure that the neighbourhood is 'permeable' by to restricting the height of buildings and size of residential blocks, and to ensure balance between public and private space)
7. achieving ***Visual Richness*** (by allowing for a variety of architectural expressions, sequencing open spaces with activity systems, and paying attention to thresholds where children play)
8. achieving ***Safety*** and ***Defensibility*** in the environment in relation to traffic and the public realm (for instance, designing the road layout to reduce traffic hazards and thoroughfares, juxtapositioning residential areas with safe functional facilities and ensuring good visibility across neighbourhoods)

### **6.3 Housing delivery – the unintended consequences**

The rate and extent of low-cost housing delivery in South Africa, particularly within the first five years of democracy, is unsurpassed in the rest of the world. Between 1994 and 2008 over 2.4 million subsidy-linked housing units were developed. While a notable achievement, there are a number of problems in the way the subsidy scheme has been conceptualized and implemented, when evaluated from the perspective of children. These are outlined in a paper published by the Children's Institute as part of a series on targeted poverty alleviation programmes (Hall 2005).

#### **6.3.1 Quality issues**

Problems with quality of housing have been raised continuously from the early 1990's. Even while South Africa was achieving housing development and delivery on a massive scale under the Reconstruction and Development Programme, many

commentators, including the South African government, were concerned that the focus on numeric targets (for instance, the promise of a million houses within five years) was at the cost of quality. The Department acknowledged as early as 1996 that “we approach mass delivery with a very real threat: that in our chase of quantity, we fall short on quality. It will be no solace at all that we created our new ghettos democratically.”<sup>7</sup> Many beneficiaries have complained of substandard housing over the years – RDP houses were reported to be structurally unsound, with cracking walls, leaks, roofs blowing off, and so on. There have also been concerns that new housing developments have tended to take place on the periphery of towns and cities, rather than on well-located land close to employment opportunities and resources, as envisaged. Further, while housing is in most instances a provincial competency, the planning and development of “neighbourhoods” – the surrounding environment, facilities and social infrastructure, falls to various departments and spheres of government, and the problem

The concerns about housing and neighbourhood quality have not abated over the years. The United Nations Special Rapporteur on Adequate Housing visited a number of housing settlements in South Africa during his visit in 2007. A draft report circulated later in the year reiterated many previously documented concerns, including about poor quality of workmanship on the actual dwellings, and about the size and structure of housing being inappropriate for families. All of these were related to process limitations – poor communication, lack of consultation and participation – and the outcomes have implications for children's health, safety and quality of life.

He saw new houses that had been hastily constructed, poorly planned and designed in the absence of any consultation between local authorities and residents. These houses were clearly inadequate to meet the housing needs of their inhabitants. For example, in Wallacedene, the site of the landmark *Grootboom* decision, the Special Rapporteur met with a household that had received a one-bedroom RDP dwelling to house a family of eight. Such inadequacies are partly caused by a housing delivery policy that is based on the concept of a ‘household’ rather than on human need. (UN Special Rapporteur on Adequate Housing (Mr Miloon Kothari) 2007)

The Special Rapporteur also noted that the policies set out in *Breaking New Ground* had not been practically adopted by many authorities at the provisional and local level.

Programmes aimed at delivering housing and creating sustainable human settlements will only succeed where they are directly informed by the people who they affect, and where they are responsive and targeted to the specific needs of a given community. However this policy has not filtered down to the local decision makers.... Although many municipalities have plans for upgrading and formalising informal settlements inspired by the *In-Situ Informal Settlement*

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<sup>7</sup> Department of Housing Annual Report 1996

*Upgrading Programme*, there is little to suggest that these plans have been implemented. The Special Rapporteur visited a number of informal settlements and saw entire families living in one room without access to even the most of basic of services, including water, electricity and sanitation. Typically these settlements are also situated away from urban centres and therefore away from the services and opportunities that promote social and economic development.

In the report, women and children were noted as being specifically at risk due to inadequate housing conditions, and particular categories of vulnerability were identified, including single women, women with children, and migrant women. The Special Rapporteur acknowledged that, while there had been some effort to meet the goal of delivering 30% of the housing stock to women-headed households, there were still obstacles which meant that women and children were at risk due to their housing and tenure situations.

The lack of affordable housing, lack of timely access to public housing, and inadequate government provisions for long term safe housing, particularly in rural areas means that many women are forced to either remain or return to situations of domestic violence, and continue to live in inadequate housing where they risk the safety of their children and themselves.

(UN Special Rapporteur on Adequate Housing (Mr Miloon Kothari) 2007)

### **6.3.2 Targeting – consequences for children, households and neighbourhoods**

In order to qualify for a housing subsidy, the applicant must be married or in a permanent partnership and/or have proven dependants – as well as passing a means test and complying with other qualifying criteria. It is mainly the issue of co-residence and dependants that concerns us here, because of the consequences for children.

The design of the housing subsidy scheme is strongly oriented towards the concept of the nuclear family. This is in keeping with the family-based approach to the development of human settlements codified as “best practice” in the Habitat Agenda and the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The notion of a stable nuclear family does not recognise the fluidity of household arrangements – what Fiona Ross refers to as “the diffusion of domesticity.” She points out that “policy-making is predicated upon the average household and its characteristics... that presumes that households exist as discrete units prior to the implementation of development policies.” (Hall 2005) Ross describes how households in a research site “engaged in complex decision-making processes, reconfiguring their household forms in order to comply with both state rules for housing and implicit social ideals.... The application process involved considerable decision-making about who belonged in domestic units.”

The housing subsidy scheme is based on a standard capital subsidy per household, and does not accommodate larger households with bigger subsidies or properties. The structure of the subsidy scheme provides a perverse incentive for households to split, in order to compound the benefits. This may force large families into a position where households are deliberately and artificially divided simply in order to access multiple subsidies and accommodate the broader family.

The nuclear family orientation of both the subsidy and dwelling may therefore result in division of families in two ways: first, the misrepresentation of household structure on paper (in the process of accessing subsidies), and second, the physical division of families (when the household is re-formed into smaller units to fit the allocated housing). However, while beneficiary households may resemble nuclear families in size, they do not necessarily do so in terms of composition. The average household size in subsidy housing projects surveyed by the Public Service Commission was four people, but only 28% conformed to what might be regarded as typical nuclear family structures consisting of parents and children. Forty percent of households were extended family units (more than 2 generations in a household), and 43% consisted of single mothers with children.

Two rounds of the national census showed a drop in average household size – from 4.5 in 1994 to 3.8 in 2001. The Department of Housing recognises that one of the broader impacts of the subsidy has been a reduction of household size, through manoeuvring to get benefits. While it was never an express intention of the subsidy scheme to manipulate household size and composition, it seems possible that this has been an outcome of the scheme. The impact on poor children of living in smaller or reconstructed households remains to be investigated.

Another consequence of subsidy scheme requirements is the artificial construction of families where none exist. Eligibility is conditional on the applicant either having a spouse or permanent partner, or dependant children. Older people in need of housing frequently have neither – for instance the exclusion of a widow whose adult children have left home and established their own families. There have been reports of both beneficiaries and housing officials circumventing this problem by arranging for the “adoption” of children who may be recorded as dependants on the application form, thereby rendering the prospective applicant eligible.

This had occurred, for instance, in case studies of informal settlement upgrading projects (in Kanana and Gunguluza respectively) where potential housing beneficiaries were in danger of being disqualified because a lack of dependants. It was found that “officials in both case study projects had attempted to accommodate non-qualifying households. ‘We arrange for them to adopt a child’ was the response to situation where,

for instance, elderly widows did not qualify, as their children had formed their own households and might themselves be applying for subsidies.” (Hutchzemeyer 2002, cited in Hall 2005)

#### **6.4 Nationally defined rights and policies – local implementation**

Decentralisation of government is generally regarded as a hallmark of “good governance” because local government is more likely than national institutions to identify, understand and respond to service delivery needs at local level. It is also seen as a way to enable participatory democracy through systems of representation at the local level. The danger of decentralisation is that it depends on local government being well resourced and capacitated. In their study on Local Government, Gender and Integrated Planning, Alison Todes, Pearl Sithole and Amanda Williamson describe how women’s rights activists have questioned the assumption that decentralisation to local government is necessarily a good thing for women. These concerns may be relevant to children too. They include arguments that local politics can be more conservative than national politics; that local government often has a weak understanding of gender, tending to associate it with services and activities associated specifically with women (such as sewing projects) which, even if they are addressed, do little to challenge gender inequalities, while analysis of the deeper social dynamics is often absent even when gender-based issues are endemic (for instance gender-based violence); and that it is easier for a small movement to engage with national government than to engage with multiple municipalities. There are concerns that an emphasis on participatory process to identify women’s needs could obscure the need for other mechanisms to understand the circumstances of women’s lives and their implications for local government activities. While small voluntary organisations are important providers of various services in poor areas, they tend to be overlooked in IDPS. Finally, despite policy commitments to gender-sensitive policy and programme development, an examination of IDPs suggests that gender has not been adequately incorporated and is still generally seen as a marginal issue within municipalities (Todes, Sithole et al. 2007). It is precisely the marginalisation of children in spatial planning and development that needs to be addressed.

While there is a relatively strong discourse on the subject of gender in local level planning, there is a gap in the literature when it comes to child-centered perspectives on the decentralization of policy and programme and implementation to local government. A South African report, Local Government, Gender and Integrated Development Planning raises basic gender-related questions that could be equally applied to children:

“The key question that arises is what happens [when implementation of policy is decentralized] to women’s rights and entitlements as defined that the national level. Are

national gender policy directives and guidelines taken through within local government, in IDP processes and outcomes, and in implementation? How can attention to women's rights and gender be strengthened in this context?" (Todes, Sithole et al. 2007)

Decentralisation refers to political or administrative reforms that transfer functions, responsibilities and resources, and/or result in greater political or financial autonomy, to lower tiers of government or outside of it. It can occur in different ways, but the main forms are:

- Democratic/political decentralisation – i.e. devolution of decision-making power to provincial or local government. This usually involves changes to strengthen provincial or local government)
- Administrative decentralisation – i.e. transfer for functions to lower tiers of government. This can be by way of *deconcentration* (transfer of functions to units of central government throughout the country), *delegation* (passing of responsibility to semi-autonomous bodies outside of government) or *devolution* (transfer of functions to provincial or local government with a degree of autonomy)

(MacLeann 2003, cited in Todes, Sithole et al. 2007)

While national and provincial government still control the main bulk of government expenditure, South Africa's governance system is decentralised in that substantial responsibilities for delivery of services for children and their families are devolved to provincial and local government. Provincial responsibilities include health, education, and social welfare services, while municipalities are responsible for roads, electricity, water, sewage and drainage infrastructure, and the delivery of basic services. Early childhood development services are also within the functions of local government, and some municipalities are accredited to take responsibility for housing development.

Importantly, the powers and responsibilities of local government have been expanded since apartheid to include the broad mandate of "developmental local government". This is defined by the Department of Provincial and Local Government as "local government committed to working with citizens and groups within the community to find ways to meet their social, economic and material needs and improve the quality of their lives." (DPLG 2001, cited in Todes, Sithole et al. 2007). Municipalities are responsible for preparing Independent Development Plans (IDPs), strategic documents which are essentially five-year planning tools. The general planning process for IDPs involves:

- Situational analysis to determine need and inform plans
- Developing future visions for the area
- Formulating development strategies to work towards the vision
- Formulating programmes of action and projects



- Methods for monitoring and review
- Structured participation, involving consultation with communities and stakeholder groups

(Todes, Sithole et al. 2007)

IDPs need to consider the situation of children and adopt specific mechanisms to include children in participatory processes and in the strategic vision. There is also an important link between child-centred and gendered policy and programme development – children are more likely to live with their mothers than with their fathers, and caregivers are overwhelmingly women. Child poverty is therefore closely associated with gender inequality, and integrated planning and development processes that address poverty and gender inequality would be child poverty and living environments.

Cole and Parnell (2000) proposed a framework to guide IDPs processes towards gendered equity and poverty reduction, the main points of which were included in the early IDP guides. Their checklist may be a useful guiding framework to ensure that children are considered in the development and evaluation of IDPs. In the following 20-point checklist of actions, the words [and children] have been added in some relevant places, though of course engagement of children at various levels would need to be appropriate to children's age and capacity.

- Build a common agreement of how poverty and gender [and children] will be defined and used in the IDP.
- Make sure that there is a strategic vision for the municipality, and that gender [and children] and poverty have some explicit mention in this document.
- Encourage full representation of women [and children, according to their capacities] in all aspects of the IDP: in public participation; in technical staff; in political committees; and in the implementing workforce.
- Train officials and councillors responsible for public liaison in issues of gender [and child] sensitivity.
- Where public meetings are held, care must be taken to ensure sensitive advertising, presentation and facilitation that will encourage the participation of the poor. Devising alternatives to public meetings ... is an important part of inclusive and effective public participation among women [and children].
- Prepare information in advance of the participation process to inform poor stakeholders of the options, so that they can make informed and realistic decisions about their priorities.
- Ensure that the terms of reference for a baseline study done for the IDP include a brief to focus on gender [and children] and poverty.
- Reduce the complexity of issues covered in the baseline survey to areas of key local authority service delivery to allow for concentrated assessments of

the social impacts of proposed actions. Where the budget is constrained, issues of gender [and child well-being] are often most effectively addressed through an emphasis on poverty.

- Develop the database in collaboration with other institutions ... to ensure that expenses are minimised.
- Identify legal requirements generated by national policy frameworks that will impact on the municipalities' management of the local environment.
- Define the impact of the service delivery approach advocated in the IDP on poor people and women [and children].
- Set key performance indicators that encourage integrated planning for the poor.
- Draw up a scheme that details resource flows and development initiatives in the municipal areas that emanate from other tiers of government, the private sector, NGOs or donors.
- In the IDP, give priority through the budget to proposals that make poverty reduction and gender equity part of their objectives.
- Politicians can insist on the finance department developing a gender and poverty policy that becomes the basis for the performance evaluation of senior finance staff.
- Make it council policy that all terms of reference for consultants and contractors specify the imperative of defining the gendered [and child-centred] and pro-poor nature of their work.
- Require business plans to be explicitly pro-poor and to provide gender-differentiated objectives. Offer rewards to those who propose pro-poor, gender sensitive [and child sensitive], integrated developments.
- Require business plans to define targets, outcomes and milestones for the pro-poor, gendered projects.
- Require business plans to link the pro-poor, gendered projects to the budget through revenue and expenditure.
- Ensure that the key performance indicators identified in the IDP for the municipality are pro-poor and gender [and child] sensitive.

(Cole & Parnell, 2000, cited in Todes, Sithole et al. 2007)

While a gender focus is generally regarded as having positive spin-off for dependant children too, Chawla emphasises the importance of paying particular attention to children in the context of human settlement policy. First, they have separate, and at times, conflicting needs (for instance, where children stay out of school to take on the burden of "women's" work). Second, the special vulnerability of children to disease and environmental hazards needs to be considered, because this sets a higher standard for service delivery and environmental management. Third, children and future generations

are the strongest reason for ensuring sustainable development, and involving children in planning provides a foundation for future habits of environmental interest and concern. Fourth, children's physical and mental development is rapid, requiring immediate – rather than remedial – nourishment and protection. Fifth, attention to children “emphasises the important of a human development focus in planning”, in the context of global forces that alter children's living environments – and children are best placed to articulate their experiences and needs. Sixth, because of their relative immobility and dependence on accessible resources in their surrounding environments, a focus on children requires focus at the community level, where small changes can have a large impact. Thus, Chawla concludes that “children need to participate as *citizens*, as *experts* and as *stewards of the environment*” (Chawla 2002)

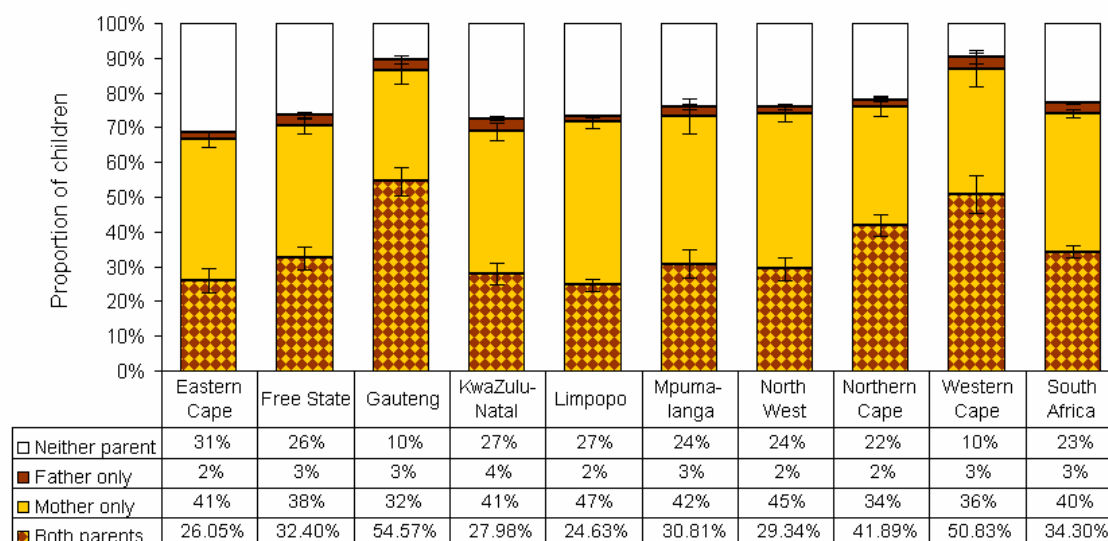
## 7 Spatial planning and urbanisation in SA

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### 7.1 Children's co-residence with parents

Because housing policy is based on the premise that households are (or should be) characterized by particular shapes, sizes and stability, it is important to understand where children live in relation to their biological parents. The following extract is from Children Count, a data project to monitor the situation of children in South Africa, and is authored by Helen Meintjes of the Children's Institute:

South Africa has a long history of children not living consistently in the same dwelling as their biological parents as a result of poverty, labour migration, educational opportunities, or cultural practice, among other things. It is common for relatives to play a substantial role in child-rearing. Children often experience a sequence of different caregivers, and many children are brought up without paternal figures, or live in different households to their biological siblings.

**Figure 5. Child and parental co-residence by province, 2007**

Source: Children Count: [www.childrencount.ci.org.za](http://www.childrencount.ci.org.za) (based on analysis of General Household Survey 2007)

The General Household Survey indicates that, in July 2007, 34% of children (0 – 17 years) in South Africa were resident with both their biological parents. A further 23% of children were resident with neither biological parent. The vast majority of these children were not double orphans: 83% of children living with neither parent still had one or both parents alive. Of the remaining children, almost all were living with their mothers in the absence of their fathers: 40% of all children – a total of more than seven million children – were living in households with their mothers but in which their fathers were not resident. Very few children live in households in which their fathers are present and their mothers are not: the national average of 3% applies roughly across all provinces. Between 2002 and 2007, there was a decrease of four percentage points (38% to 34%) in the proportion of children living with both parents.

There is some provincial variation in these patterns. In both the Western Cape and Gauteng, the proportion of children living with both parents was significantly higher than the national average, with more than half of children resident with both parents (50% and 55% respectively). Similarly, the number of children living with neither parent was low in these two provinces (10% in both instances). In contrast, the proportion of children living with neither parent in the Eastern Cape (31%) was above the national average, totaling almost one third of the provincial child population. These patterns are consistent from 2002 to 2007.

The pattern of children's residence with parents is highly differentiated according to race. While less than one third of African children were living with both their parents in July 2007, the vast majority of Indian and White children (82% and 80% respectively) were resident with both biological parents. Almost one quarter (24%) of all African children were not living with

either of their parents in July 2007. Forty-three percent of African children were resident with their mother in the absence of their father. These figures are striking for the way in which they suggest the limited presence of fathers in the domestic lives of large numbers of African children.

The data also illustrate that younger children (0 – 5-year-olds) are more likely to be living with their mothers (whether their fathers are present or not) than older children (6 – 17-years), who are more likely than younger children to be living with neither parent. While 15% of children aged 0 – 5 years were not resident with either parent in July 2007, this situation applied to more than a quarter of children aged 6 – 17 years.

(Meintjes in Children's Institute 2008)

## **7.2 Children on the move: mobility and urban migration**

*“Nothing reshapes the social landscape as rapidly as moving people.”  
(Landau & Polzer in South African Cities Network 2008)*

*“The call for child-friendly cities is rooted in the recognition that cities are home to an increasing proportion of the world's children.”(Riggio 2002)*

There is an absence of statistical data that tracks the movement of children over time, or examines the reasons for child mobility. Yet qualitative studies have shown that children are highly mobile, with movement across households, towns and provinces being driven by a range of factors, including changing care arrangements due to adult migration, HIV/AIDS illness and death, poverty or the need to position children close to schools, health facilities and other resources. This is discussed in Part 1 of the review.

Loren Landau and Tara Polzer of the Forced Migration and Studies Programme at Wits University discuss the tendency for local government to shy away from the fact of migration, rather than “mainstreaming” it into their planning and service delivery. This exacerbates exclusion of both domestic and foreign migrants, and undermines the realisation of human rights, as well as the economic and physical security of urban populations in general. What is important is to focus on the service delivery, and to improve co-ordination between spheres of government, to increase the visibility of ‘marginal’ and mobile segments of the population, and to understand and predict the movements of people. A better – and localised – understanding of the urban population is necessary for the translation of national policy to local development programmes.

*“National governments have the relative luxury of developing generalized policy frameworks, while local governments and service providers must channel resources to those in need, and translate broad objectives into socially-embedded initiatives. One of the primary challenges Metros face, in responding*

to migration, relates to how little they know about the people living in the cities.” (Landau & Polzer in South African Cities Network 2008)

Across the range of literature is a call for statistical analysis at small area level, including poverty mapping, as well as good qualitative and participatory research. There is also a need – particularly in relation to children – to understand the mechanisms of migration and the impact of migration on livelihoods and living environments, in order to inform appropriate and integrated development plans.

In theory, urban migration would be expected to improve quality of life because it is mainly driven by the quest for employment opportunities, and therefore to increase monetary income, which in turn enables households to buy the goods and services they need. Cities by definition have a higher density of population than non-urban areas, and this should enable better infrastructure and service delivery – though again, this is not always the case in practice. Urbanization does not necessarily result in improvements to children's shelter and service needs, or the income of their households. This may partly explain why families, historically (and deliberately) fragmented along age and gender lines, continue to be divided. Anecdotal evidence during fieldwork in a Children's Institute research project, the Means to Live, suggested that some mothers made conscious decisions to leave children at a rural family home when they themselves moved to urban areas in search of work, because they knew that they would not – immediately, at least – be able to secure accommodation in places that offered suitable living environments. There was concern that informal settlements, often the first stop for adults migrating to cities, lacked the services and resources that children needed and were dangerous in a number of respects.

Studies have shown that one of the drivers of migration is the existence of migrant networks, where knowing a person in the destination is the mechanism. Migration is facilitated by connections of people over space, so that it has its own momentum and leads to 'cumulative causation' – a 'self-feeding' process (Kok 2003, Starke & Levhari 1982, Curran & Saguy 2001, Massey 2000, cited in Collinson, Kok et al. 2006). Thus “the propensity to migrate grows over time through expansion and intensification of the migrant network” (Collinson, Kok et al. 2006). This network is essential for securing accommodation and accessing land. A study of land markets in three South African cities concluded that the dominance of social relations as a mechanism for informal land access means that “the normal policy tools the state has at its disposal for intervening in markets are neither useful nor applicable” (Marx 2007)

Around three quarters of all internal migration nationally is to metropolitan areas, although it is important to remember that migration is not necessarily one-directional or permanent. Kok et al (2003) outline a more flexible typology of migration based on both spatial and temporal mobility elements, so that it that encompasses circulation as

well as more permanent migration. The main categories of spatio-temporal mobility are conceptualised in relation to adult mobility, linked to labour migration: 'short-term labour migration', 'long-term labour migration' and 'permanent migration'. There appears to be an absence of quantitative analysis on internal migration that explores the mechanisms that drive child migration, and of empirical research on "family" urban migration from a children's perspective, in particular to understand the extent to which takes place in a phased manner, with generations migrating at different times. This is partly due to the construction of national household surveys such as those undertaken by Statistics South Africa, which are cross-sectional and where the definition of household includes only people who are physically residing in the household at the time of the survey, and excludes linked members who are not present. Data from the Agincourt surveillance site indicated an increase in temporary child migration (mostly to Gauteng), calculated at 7% in 2003 – up from less than 1% in 1992. This occurred for both sexes, and was related to schooling choices (Collinson, Kok et al. 2006).

The Statistics South Africa report "Migration and changing settlement patterns" is based on analyses of two main data sources: Census data, which in 2001 enabled a migration community profile by analysing 'main place' of residence and comparing that with 'previous place'; and data from the Agincourt Health and Demographic Surveillance System provided useful data because (a) it used a broader definition of households, which includes linked household members such as temporary migrants who are not present at the time of the survey, and (b) its longitudinal panel design (in fact a census of 21 villages in Limpopo) captures demographic events for the individual and household over time.

At a sub-provincial level, the findings of the study were that women aged 15-25 years were the most mobile category, with the most important categories being 1) young women moving alone (whether or not they are mothers); 2) women moving with children and 3) women with men and children. Since children are potentially involved in all three of the most mobile categories we can assume that children are also part of the migrant labour movement – whether they move or are 'left behind'. Another important sub-provincial finding is that, due to patterns of circular migration, it is small towns rather than metropolitan areas that are growing rapidly. While there has always been a two-way flow between rural and metropolitan areas within provinces, the net in-migration is to the smaller towns, which are destinations for those moving from rural areas as well as those returning from large cities. This suggests a need for greater attention to social and service infrastructure development and local government capacity building in small towns and rural areas, as well as in metropolitan areas.

At a household level, models suggest that household fragmentation through temporary or circular (as opposed to permanent) migration is a means for survival,

driven by a complex of economic and social strategies – to maximise household income, minimise economic risk and increase exposure to social resources such as education and health care. Thus household members “spread themselves over rural and urban places to experience the particular utility each has to offer” and this is a cumulative process, facilitated by a network of kin, extended kin and migrant networks (Collinson, Kok et al. 2006). While urban migration was historically driven by male migrants, work by Dorit Posel shows that a net increase in migration from rural areas during the 1990's was the result of a rise in adult female migration – who by 2000 made up 34% of the urban migrant population.

As the authors point out, while the direction of migration is towards urban and metropolitan areas, this does not mean that rural areas are becoming depopulated:

There are strong links between many of the metropolis-bound migrants and their homes in the rural area. Thus, if everybody was at their main home at the time of the census the metropolisation would not look so extreme. Furthermore the removal of the migrant from the rural area does not necessarily change the ratio between households in rural areas and households in urban areas. (Collinson, Kok et al. 2006)

Although circular migration brings some economic benefits to rural households with migrant members, it results in further inequality in rural areas, where the costs of migration are sustained by rural households, and excluded households are trapped in deep poverty without external income sources or local resources. “Such poverty is hard to relieve through intervention because the poorest at the most remote and least connected to possible means of support or amelioration” (Collinson, Kok et al. 2006).

### **7.3 Transitional spaces: children and informality**

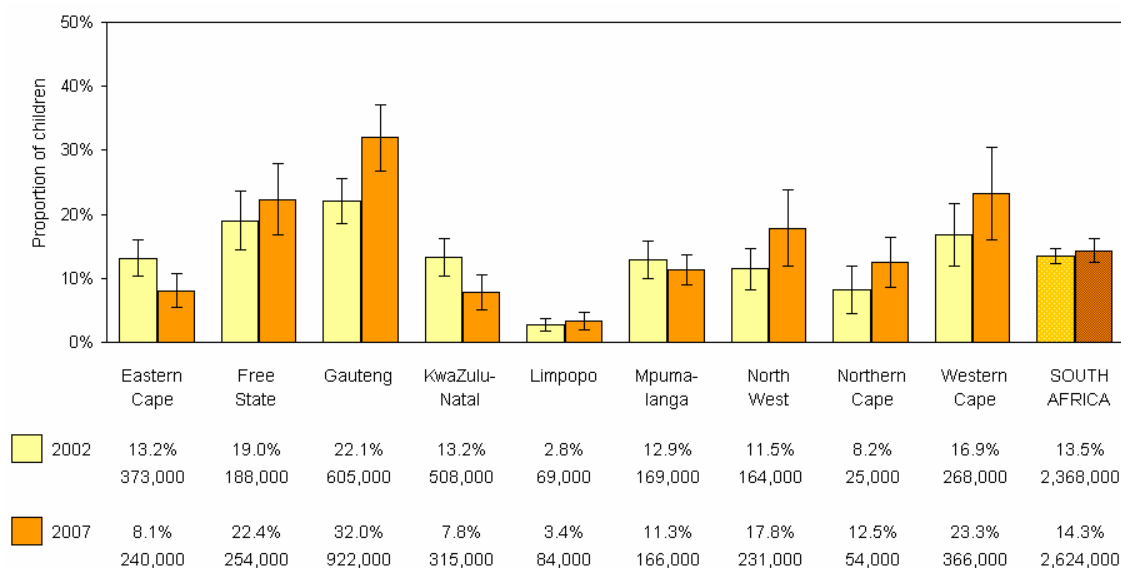
A study commissioned by Urban LandMark showed that informal settlements are important transitional spaces in the context of urban migration, and that informal tenure is an important mechanism and necessary process of land acquisition. Informal settlements are therefore points of access to the city for people who cannot obtain their own land through formal processes. The findings also suggest that informal settlements are a route through which young people claim independence – thus one of the main reasons for moving to informal settlements is “getting older” (Marx 2007). Both of these motivators – initial land access and a move towards independence – imply transition, and in many instances children are involved. Although children did not feature in the study report, it is clear that children are very present. An analysis of household structure in the informal settlements showed that, although there were more single-adult households than in other housing types, nuclear families and single parent households predominated.



Despite policy intentions to curb or control migration to cities (for instance, the Housing Department's goal to "eradicate" informal settlements), there is increasing acknowledgement that urban migration cannot be stemmed, and instead cities need to become more inclusive. There is even some recognition that it would be both impossible and inappropriate to get rid of informal settlements or prevent their establishment, because they are an important mechanism of land access for those who migrate to cities.

While children are proportionately less likely than adults to live in informal settlements, a significant number of children – 2.6 million are informally housed. And despite massive delivery of formal housing, there is no quantifiable decline in the number or proportion of children living in informal housing (shacks in backyards or informal settlements). The figure below, derived from a child-centred analysis of Statistics South Africa's data, shows that if anything, the proportion of informally housed children may be increasing in some provinces, particularly those which are the sites of rapid in-migration.

**Figure 6. Children living in informal housing in South Africa, 2002 & 2007**



Source: Children Count: [www.childrencount.ci.org.za](http://www.childrencount.ci.org.za) (based on analysis of General Household Surveys 2002 & 2007)

Over the same six-year period (2002-2007) statistics for Gauteng province show a significant increase in the proportion of children living in overcrowded conditions, defined as more than two people per room (including living room and kitchen but excluding bathrooms). In 2002, 20% of children living in Gauteng lived in overcrowded dwellings, and by 2007 this proportion had increased to 31%.

Over-crowding is a problem because it can undermine children's other needs and rights – for instance, the rights to education, privacy, health and protection from abuse. Children in crowded households may struggle to negotiate space for their own activities. For instance, it is difficult for school children in overcrowded households to do homework at night if other household members want to sleep or watch television. Children's right to privacy can also be infringed if they do not have space to wash or change in private. The right to health can be infringed as communicable diseases such as respiratory infections (including tuberculosis) and diarrhoea spread more easily in overcrowded conditions. Over-crowding also places children at greater risk of sexual abuse, especially where boys and girls have to share beds, or children have to sleep with adults. Analyses of the General Household Survey (2002 to 2007) show that children under the age of six years are more likely than older children to live in over-crowded households. (Hall in Children's Institute 2008)

The issue of informal living environments in South Africa requires more research and analysis from a children's perspective, in order to motivate for and guide responses, which may range from the way in which housing subsidies are targeted, to urgent delivery of critical services for children, to addressing issues of space and safety for children. International studies have made strong links between poor living conditions in informal settlements and preventable child deaths, and show associations between informal/overcrowded living conditions and poorer school performance, indicating that "quality of housing and community space affects not only the physical health and safety of children, but also their capacity to learn, and their emotional and social well-being" (Centre on Housing Rights and Evictions 2006). A local study that specifically set out to record children's experiences of informal settlement life not only highlighted the importance of housing and accessible and reliable services such as clean water, sanitation and waste removal, but also explored issues of dignity, fear and stigma for children (Swart-Kruger 2000).

#### **7.4 The National Spatial Development Perspective**

Spatial planning and government investment in development is guided by the National Spatial Development Perspective (NSDP) of the presidency, which is intended to inform the development plans of the three spheres of government – including Integrated Development Plans at both local and provincial level, and the Medium Term Expenditure Framework – and enable intergovernmental co-ordination. The underlying principle of the NSDP is that economic growth is a prerequisite for achieving other policy objectives and particularly poverty alleviation. Accordingly, government spending on fixed investment beyond basic services (health, education and municipal services) is focused on areas of economic growth and potential – primarily metropolitan, industrial and urban centres, and their adjacent nodes (Department of

Housing undated). The rationale for the distinction is that there will be a flow of people towards areas of higher economic potential, and the focus on investment in these areas suggests that this will become a self-fulfilling prophecy, since one of the mechanisms of migration is movement towards opportunities and resources. However, given the fact that much of the migration in South Africa is not permanent but temporary or circular, often involving individuals rather than households, it will be important that rural areas with low economic potential (many of which are historically and severely under-resourced) are not overlooked. In terms of the NSDP, areas identified as having low development potential should not be major recipients of government investment beyond the provision of basic services and social transfers. This means that spending on infrastructure and the development of space will be concentrated in metropolitan areas and areas identified as nodes of economic growth, while investments in medium to low potential areas – albeit with high human need – will be limited largely to social investments.

### **7.5 Spatial targeting**

Spatial targeting is made easy by the existence of the structurally segregated society created under apartheid, with homogenously rich (mostly white) and poor (mostly black) communities. Post-apartheid policies seek to undo the inequities of the past – but it is important that there is a coherent logic across government departments.

The focus of housing policy is on informal settlement upgrading and the densification and integration of cities. The national Department of Housing is developing an inclusionary housing policy, with a strong focus on social and low-cost rental housing in the inner city, as well as the development of low-cost owner housing on well-located municipal land. Ironically, this could confound the spatial targeting approach used by the Department of Education. The less static and homogenous the population in a ward or enumerator area, the less accurate the targeting mechanism. Ideally, the spatial targeting method used by the Department of Education should not be regarded as a long-term option.

The spatial method of targeting, in which the school rankings are determined in relation to poverty in the surrounding area, presupposes that learners automatically come from the area physically surrounding the school. For those who travel to fee-paying schools in less poor areas, the fee exemption is still the only mechanism for poor households to be relieved of the burden of school fees. A provincial education official in the Western Cape described this as a flaw in the conceptualisation of the quintile system, since the department has already designated some schools in relatively wealthy areas as “commuter schools”, where daily transport is provided to bring children from poorer areas. During the pilot introduction of the no-fee policy in the Western Cape in 2006, the poverty ratings for commuter schools were adjusted so that they could also

qualify for no-fee status. Before the formal national implementation of no-fee schools, then, exceptions were already introduced in an effort to prevent the quintile system from discriminating against poor children.

The no-fee system may work best in small towns and rural areas, where there is little choice about which school to attend. In more densely populated metropolitan areas, however, schools are more likely to be over-subscribed, there are more options, and children may not necessarily attend the schools closest to their homes. A number of surveyed urban caregivers were, despite deep poverty, were exercising their choice and sending children to schools that they perceived as offering a better quality of education. (Hall, Leatt et al. Forthcoming)

## 8 Towards child-friendly cities

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*“The well-being of children is the ultimate indicator of a healthy habitat, a democratic society and good governance.” (UNCHS/Habitat & Children's Environments Research Group 1996)*

### 8.1 Child-focused research: Growing Up In Cities

It is generally accepted that planning and development in the built environment should be informed by a good understanding of the experiences and needs of the local population(s). Situational analysis and needs assessments are standard fare, but these seldom get to heart of children's experiences of their living environments. Instead, there has been an alternative and relatively recent, child-focused effort, which is documented in the child-centred literature.

An early and prominent study on young people's perception and experience of their local environment was the Growing Up In Cities project headed by Kevin Lynch (1977) which, two decades later, was reinitiated with the support of UNESCO (Travlou 2003). The initial research took place in four cities undergoing rapid change – Melbourne, Warsaw, Salta and Mexico City – and underlined the importance of urban space for adolescents during their development into adulthood. The later research programme supported by UNESCO included these four cities and another four – Buenos Aires, Northampton, Trondheim and Johannesburg (see Swart-Kruger and Chawla 2002).

<p>“The principal objective of the reinitiated Growing Up In Cities (GUIC) project was to document some of the human costs and benefits of economic development by</p>
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showing how the young people's use and perception of the resulting micro-environment affects their lives and their personal development... and to use young people's own perceptions and priorities as the basis for participatory programmes for (re)shaping urban environments. It is about closing the dualities and differences between rhetoric and reality, research and action. The project also explores these notions across time and culture through its longitudinal and cross cultural dimensions.

Another feature of the project was its interdisciplinary nature. The recent work, as in the past, was conducted by interdisciplinary teams who combined experience with social research and city planning and design. The recent project involved architects, urban planners, geographers, psychologists, anthropologists, educators, community developers, activists and social workers from cities around the world."

Despite being two decades apart, the original and new GUIC projects had strikingly similar findings about the needs and constraints expressed by children living in urban environments.

Features that determined good environments for children were:

- a feeling of social integration and acceptance
- varied, interesting activity settings
- peer gathering places
- a general sense of safety and freedom of movement
- a cohesive community identity
- green areas for informal play and exploration as well as organised sports

Features identified as constraints – sources of alienation or dissatisfaction were:

- social exclusion and stigma
- boredom
- fear of crime or harassment
- heavy traffic
- uncollected rubbish and litter

(Travlou 2003)

The early Growing Up In Cities project undertaken by Lynch recommended research approaches with multiple methods that combined quantitative analysis with participatory work (Travlou 2003). These include:

- The collection of census demographics and maps showing the local socio-environmental features
- The collection of material related to the local culture of childhood
- Observational work on children's use of the community
- Individual interviews with small groups of children and youth
- Guided tours led by children
- Interviews with parents and local officials regarding their perceptions of how current environmental conditions and changes affect children's lives.

Subsequent research programmes with and about children have used a range of these methods, although there are few that have combined them in the multi-dimensional way envisaged by Lynch. In particular, there is a shortage of child-centred statistical analysis, particularly at small area level. South Africa has a wealth of national household survey data and a census every 10 years, but children tend to get lost in generic reporting on the socio-economic situation of the population. There are two important exceptions to this: the Children Count project at the Children's Institute which uses national household surveys and administrative data to monitor the situation of children using a range of indicators related to socio-economic rights; and work by the Centre for the Analysis of South African Social Policy (CASASP), which uses census data to measure multiple indicators of deprivation at municipal level, making it possible derive a poverty ranking of municipalities from a children's perspective (Barnes, Wright et al. 2007). Where child-centred analyses are undertaken, children are found to be disproportionately poor (compared to adults and the general population) in a range of dimensions, and particularly in terms of their living environments. Ward (2007) emphasises the importance of monitoring child outcomes at small area (neighbourhood) level, because unlike national or provincial statistics which 'flatten' both cause and effect, localised analyses are able to indicate the presence of neighbourhood factors which impede or facilitate the fulfilment of children's rights. A constraint to doing this in South Africa is that, other than the national census, one is likely to be limited to administrative data and small area surveys, which offer varying content and quality

The main bulk of the existing child-centred research on living environments and children's experience of the built environment has been qualitative. Within South Africa, Jill Kruger has undertaken a number of studies with children, notably as part of the Johannesburg "Growing Up In Cities" programme. Growing Up In Cities (GUIC) is essentially about involving children in "evaluating their own environments and planning how to improve the conditions of their lives. With the ultimate goal of influencing municipal policies through the inclusion of children's perspectives, it seeks to build broad alliances of people committed to taking action on children's behalf in community-based and non-governmental organisations, and across different sectors of government" (Swart-Kruger and Chawla 2002).

In 1999 a resolution was passed by the Greater Johannesburg Metropolitan Council to make Johannesburg child-friendly, and it formally became part of the international GUIC initiative when the then mayor, Isaac Mogase, signed a partnership agreement with UNICEF. The metropolitan council commissioned research which would enable children to "speak out" on their living conditions, and this was undertaken in four diverse sites around greater Johannesburg. The research used a combination of methods – drawing, mapping and group discussions, followed by workshops. Children identified physical areas in which they felt safe or unsafe, and made specific recommendations for

improving them (eg. the need for recreational facilities, clean and safe parks, street lighting, waste removal, better transport) and these were ranked for boys and girls. The recommendations were shared with parents, organisations and the mayor's office, and it was envisaged that the report would influence the development of a "Municipal Plan of Action for Children". However, it is unclear how it influenced local-level planning, if at all.

As Swart-Kruger and Chawla (2002) point out, "even when they are consulted and identify problems, children cannot accomplish change on their own. It is adults who hold the reins of power for [child-friendly] urban transformation" – and that requires political commitment, inter-departmental collaboration and some continuity in the processes and people who hold key positions. While Johannesburg was (until the list was recently removed) still listed as a participating city on the "Child-friendly Cities" website, the local initiative appears to have fizzled out. There has been a change in mayor, the position of City Manager: Child-friendly Cities has become vacant (and possibly no longer exists), and the South African Director of the Growing Up In Cities Programme has moved to another town.

A new initiative, the Children's City Project, is underway in the Msunduzi municipality (Pietermaritzburg), involving local government, business and the University of KwaZulu Natal. An overarching vision for the city has been formulated, and a participatory Children's City study devised to generate information. Initial infrastructure development will be a multi-purpose "development and innovation park" for children in the city centre – possibly to be housed in a disused school. Various structures are envisaged to enable children's participation, including a children's Governance Group and a Children's City Stakeholder Forum. Ultimately the project, envisaged as a 12-year campaign, sets out to transform the city so that "the current generation of children will play a deciding role in imagining, and bringing to fruition, a child-friendly city and a secure, healthy and prosperous future for coming generations." (Msunduzi Innovation and Development Institute 2008)

## **8.2 Principles of child-friendly cities**

The idea of child-friendly cities evolved in 1995 out of an international meeting in preparation for the UN Habitat conference, where delegates acknowledged that the agenda did not pay sufficient attention to the needs of children for safe, secure and healthy living conditions. This led to the establishment of a caucus, led by Plan International, which met in New York in February 1996 and drafted a resolution around children's rights, including the right to housing (UNCHS/Habitat & Children's Environments Research Group 1996). Acknowledging the centrality of the CRC for determining the habitat needs of children, an expert group went on to prepare a document, entitled "Children's Rights & Habitat", which outlined the "living conditions

and principles of governance necessary for achieving children's rights" (UNCHS/Habitat & Children's Environments Research Group 1996). A second meeting, held in Istanbul in June the same year, evolved the ideas of the New York session and defined a range of guiding strategies and mechanisms to help overcome the local and regional obstacles to the development of child-friendly cities. These were closely linked to the provisions of the CRC and were organised to address children's living environments at the level of family, the home and its surroundings, and community. In 2000, UNICEF established a Child Friendly Cities Secretariat at its Innocenti Research Centre in Florence, specifically to develop frameworks and support work on child-friendly cities (Riggio 2002).

The CRC preamble identifies the 'family' as the primary institution and best environment for protecting and promoting the rights and well-being of children, and this is taken as a departure point for the Children's Rights and Habitat discussions and ensuing declaration. By putting the family at the centre, the CRC not only places a responsibility on families – however they are constructed – to care and provide for children, but also implies targeting of services and interventions to the child via the household in instances where caregivers lack the means and mechanisms to carry out their duty of care towards children. In the South African context in particular, 'family' does not necessarily mean nuclear family. Child-centred analyses of national household data by the Children's Institute ([www.childrencount.ci.org.za](http://www.childrencount.ci.org.za)) show that many children – nearly one fifth of all children in South Africa – are not co-resident with their biological mother, even though their mother is alive. In the majority of cases, these children live with grandparents or other relatives, while their mothers live elsewhere.

The key principle of a "child-friendly" city, according to UNICEF, is good governance, which involves a range of government and civil society actors. UNICEF outlines eight main characteristics of "good governance" (Innocenti Research Centre 2002)

- (1) Good governance promotes and encourages participation, including that of children
- (2) it requires respect for the rule of law, and the full protection of human rights
- (3) it involves transparency in decision-making, and information is freely available and easily understandable to all
- (4) it is responsive, implementing decisions and meeting needs within a reasonable time frame
- (5) it is consensus-oriented, involving the mediation of different interests in society and a sensitivity towards the relative influence of different actors, including the poorest and most marginalised
- (6) it promotes equity and inclusiveness, such that all members of society feel that they have a stake in that society



- (7) it means that processes and institutions produce effective results that meet the needs of society, while making the most efficient use of resources and promoting sustainability
- (8) it is founded upon accountability, not only of governmental institutions, but also of the private sector and civil society organisations

Nine “building blocks” are outlined as are steps in a process aimed at implementing child rights locally through the development of child-friendly cities, and have been used by some cities as monitoring and reporting frameworks (see, for example, UNICEF Spanish Committee 2005).

### *Child-friendly City building blocks<sup>8</sup>*

1. **Children's participation:** promoting children's active involvement in issues that affect them; listening to their views and taking them into consideration in decision-making processes
2. **A child friendly legal framework:** ensuring legislation, regulatory frameworks and procedures which consistently promote and protect the rights of all children
3. **A city-wide Children's Rights Strategy:** developing a detailed, comprehensive strategy or agenda for building a Child Friendly City, based on the Convention
4. **A Children's Rights Unit or coordinating mechanism:** developing permanent structures in local government to ensure priority consideration of children's perspective
5. **Child impact assessment and evaluation:** ensuring that there is a systematic process to assess the impact of law, policy and practice on children - in advance, during and after implementation
6. **A children's budget:** ensuring adequate resource commitment and budget analysis for children
7. **A regular State of the City's Children Report:** ensuring sufficient monitoring and data collection on the state of children and their rights
8. **Making children's rights known:** ensuring awareness of children's rights among adults and children
9. **Independent advocacy for children:** supporting non-governmental organisations and developing independent human rights institutions - children's ombudspersons or commissioners for children - to promote children's rights.

While South Africa has a strong child-rights framework at the national level, many of the requirements for realising children's rights are not in place at city level. The

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<sup>8</sup> [http://www.childfriendlycities.org/resources/index\\_building\\_cfc.html](http://www.childfriendlycities.org/resources/index_building_cfc.html) (viewed June 2009)

proposed building blocks suggest the need for separate or parallel systems focusing specifically on children – a children's unit and children's budget and separate child outcome monitoring systems.

Another framework, outlined in Children's Rights & Habitat, distinguishes between considerations or interventions for realising children's rights at the levels of family, home and surrounding environment, and neighbourhood or community:

### ***8.2.1 Conditions for achieving the rights of children at the family level***

At the level of the family, Children's Rights & Habitat emphasizes that “whenever possible, children must be able to live with their families in adequate, secure housing”. Lack of housing is noted as a “serious impediment” to families and their ability to provide care. Access to housing includes legal security of tenure and protection from eviction, as well as the information, credit, land, material and rental opportunities to access housing. A number of attributes are required for housing to be appropriate and adequate for family life, including the following:

- location must allow access to basic services and the necessities of life
- housing should provide accommodation for the entire family, as locally defined, and allow access to informal support networks
- there should be adequate space, facilities, lighting, ventilation and warmth
- conditions in the physical environment of the home must support the capacity of parents, grandparents and other caregivers to provide nurturant care for children

Further, in order for families to be able to provide adequately for their children, conditions of family life should not be disrupted or undermined: families need access to resources and income-earning opportunities, as well as to information and services. The document reiterates the dual responsibility of family and state, in that the state has an obligation to support and assist caregivers in providing an environment that is in the best interest of the child. Where family environments are abusive or neglect the needs of children, it is also the responsibility of the state to protect children.

### ***8.2.2 Conditions within the home and surrounding environment***

Because the home and its surroundings are the primary environments of children during the critical early period of their lives, the home environment must be “secure, safe and healthy, must facilitate caregiving and must meet children's basic physical, social, cultural and psychological needs.” According to Children's Rights & Habitat, this requires that caregivers have basic knowledge about child development, environmental care, health and nutrition – and be supported in the use of this knowledge. Relevant to physical planning and service delivery is the requirement that

children have a safe, healthy environment, beginning in the prenatal period. This includes:

- a safe, sufficient and affordable supply of clean water
- adequate sanitation
- adequate nutrition with safe storage and preparation areas
- protection from risk of injury in and around the home
- protection from exposure to risks and to toxins (this also entails energy sources which are not dangerous or harmful)
- adequate management of waste, including surface run-off, waste water and solid waste

### **8.2.3 *Conditions within the neighbourhood and community***

A “Children on the City Agenda” was prepared by participants at an international meeting of mayors, urban planners and policy makers in Florence, which outlined “a new vision for urban children and families: strategies and actions”. It proposed that mayors should assume responsibility for the children of their cities, and in a declaration called upon mayors worldwide “to make a decisive commitment to protect the rights of our children ... and to ensure, by making our cities more humane, that all children have a better future” (UNCHS/Habitat & Children's Environments Research Group 1996).

Children's Rights & Habitat includes a range of recommendations about how to achieve healthy environments in order to maintain basic survival and promote a better quality of life for children (UNCHS/Habitat & Children's Environments Research Group 1996) . These include:

- environmental health (provision of basic infrastructure, adequate services and waste removal, as well as the need to minimize air pollution and ensure road safety)
- access to preventative and curative health services, as well as health information (for instance, people in marginal or informal settlements must have a way of accessing the full range of health care)
- protection from intolerance, violence and all forms of exploitation, (including protection of children from abuse and exposure to drugs within their communities)
- protection from work that is unlawful, harmful, or interferes with children's opportunities for play and education
- the provision of accessible, adequate and responsive child-care services, including for children whose caregivers are unable to attend to children's needs because they are sick, working or some other reason

- access to education for all children, without discrimination, including education that promotes the health and safety of children in relation to the living environment. This includes early childhood development (ECD), as a 'necessary foundation of life'
- access to appropriate opportunities for play and recreation, including safe, age-appropriate and conducive spaces for recreation within the community environment
- public spaces where children can assemble freely and participate in public life, including places and activities that support expression and identity
- safe routes for moving around towns and cities, by foot, bicycle and public transport
- spaces and opportunities for children to have a voice in their communities, as a means of better meeting their needs as children, and in preparation for full participation in civil society. To this end, basic education should include dialogue on local development, and children should be involved, according to their capacities, in the design of environments intended explicitly for them, such as recreational space, schools and children's hospitals.

These levels – family, surrounding environment and neighbourhood / community – could be used as a framework for evaluating South African policy and service delivery: its achievements, shortcomings and potential for better alignment with the rights and needs of children.

Frameworks and guidelines for thinking about child-friendly cities and child rights realisation abound in the literature. The main common principles are around meeting basic needs for survival and development (including issues of security, shelter and basic service delivery, social, educational and health infrastructure) and adopting inclusive processes that engage children (issues of participation, consultation and governance).

### **8.3 Negotiating for child-friendly environments – child participation**

*“Children and young people should not only be encouraged to identify the problems and solutions in their local neighbourhoods, they should also, together with adults, be part of the action for change.” (Granberg and Olofsson 2006)*

*“Before, the mayor decided how to spend the city's month and the people had to accept it... now we want to know where the money goes.”*

*“We learnt about citizenship through practice.”*

*“I started to participate in the council because I thought it was a game; but I ended up liking the game so much that I'm going to keep playing it forever.”*

*(Children from the Barra Mansa Children's Council, Brazil, quoted in Guerra 2002)*

A “Children on the City Agenda” prepared at an international meeting of mayors, urban planners and policy makers in 1992 outlined a vision for transforming cities to realize the provisions of the CRC (UNCHS/Habitat & Children's Environments Research Group 1996). Underlying this vision is the assertion that “children are citizens who have rights and the capacity for improving their own lives and the communities in which they live”, and that “municipalities are not only the exclusive providers but also the facilitators of services to families and children”. The vision is therefore one of decentralization and good governance, including a commitment to enable the participation of local groups (including children and youth) in the information gathering, planning and implementation process. The direct participation of children and youth in city programmes is regarded as the “apex” of the child-friendly city effort (Racelis and Aguirre 2002), but is extremely hard to achieve.

In her work on good governance in the context of child-friendly cities, Eliana Riggio states that “a city committed to child rights will ground its system of governance in the four general principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child”. *Non-discrimination* (Article 2) means that the rights of ALL children should be fulfilled, and requires disaggregated data to show intra-urban variation. Whether decisions are made in the *best interests of the child* (Article 3) should be assessed through participatory monitoring systems, while the *right to life and maximum development* (Article 6) creates an imperative to provide basic services and social infrastructure for all, and to make spaces safe for children. *Respecting children's views* (Article 12) is the principle that promotes child participation and freedom of expression. (Riggio 2002)

The multiple references to child participation in the literature focus on three main categories or phases of participation: (1) taking children into account, in order to define problems and inform planning – in this context involving children in research and analysis so that research is “with” rather than “on” children; (2) giving children a say – involving children in decision making; (3) enabling children to participate in planning and monitoring. There appears to be an absence of literature that clearly documents child participation in practice, particularly in relation to decision-making and monitoring, although many countries and cities clearly have specific structures and processes that are meant to promote participation of this kind (see, for example, Riggio 2002). A report on child-friendly initiatives in five sections in the Philippines (Racelis and Aguirre 2005) includes a section on participation in which, despite numerous structures, summits and modes of participation, it becomes apparent that achieving (and measuring) meaningful participation remains a challenge – not least because the very conceptualisation of child participation is rather nebulous, making it difficult to pinpoint measurable indicators to determine whether participation has been achieved.

“Of the four sets of rights, this one is least understood or accepted and draws the fewest initiatives... While adults are comfortable with children participating in song or dance performances, the idea of the latter's taking part in decisions affecting everyday issues or development programs still lies beyond the range of local experience.” (Racelis and Aguirre 2005)

Some forms of ‘participation’ are more about youth involvement in (and council sponsorship of) social, cultural and sporting activities than about enabling children to influence local planning processes. For instance, youth councils were established in Philippino cities, but these are largely ineffective – one being described as a mere “decoration” – and do little to engage children. Children's Congresses have been held in two places, Cebu and Manila, although in the latter case it appears that child participation was limited by the fact that the youth council chose the children who could participate, and selected them on the basis of their family prominence or their status as bursary recipients.

Citing Roger Hart's eight-rung ladder of participation, which ranges from rungs 1-3: manipulation, decoration and tokenism, to 7&8: child-initiated and directed, shared decisions with adults, the authors conclude that in most cases the range of child participation may have spanned the first six steps (up to “adult initiated, shared decisions with children), but seldom above that. The notable exception is in Cebu, where some joint decision-making is achieved (Racelis and Aguirre 2005)

One way to give meaning to public participation (and children's participation in particular) is to enable participation in the management of public funds. A study of a children's participatory budget council in Barra Mansa, Brazil (a small city of 170,000 people) describes a representative system where children were elected by their peers to a children's council which has at its disposal a small portion of the municipal budget (equivalent to about US\$180,000 in 2001) which can be spent on public works and services determined by children (Guerra 2002). Under the broad programme “Citizenship Knows No Age”, the council was established through a municipal law, is situated within the mayor's office and supported by teachers, resident's associations, church groups and adult councillors. An explicit objective of the programme is encourage children to play an active citizenship role, and give them the space and skills to do so. Projects for expenditure through the participatory budgeting process include maintenance of schools and equipment, better security and improvements to playgrounds in poor areas, repairs of sewers and drains, and tree planting (Guerra 2002).

Much of the literature points to the need for participatory and consultation processes to be ‘child-friendly’ because many of the models and processes for adult participation are not appropriate or empowering for children. A notable extension of this idea is the Swedish children's GIS mapping process, described above – a method which was

specifically chosen because, while it was accessible and appealing to children and could be implemented through schools, it was also 'planner-friendly'. The rationale was that if information is to be used, it should be in a form that is accessible to the user.

“With a heavy work load, large amounts of information to process, and stakeholders' views and policy decisions to take into consideration, information that does not fit into the normal pattern and that cannot easily be shared by those involved in the process will probably not be used.” (Berglund 2008)

This raises questions about whether and how child-centred research can be translated into a form that can be integrated into urban planning frameworks – how to bridge the gap between child-friendly and planner-friendly? This includes further exploration around the question of how to enable children to exercise their own right to participation which, Racelis and Aguirre argue, is an inherent right, and not one given to them by adults.

## 9 Integrated development – a case study

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The remarkable case study below is included as an example of urban transformation that did not get bogged down in micro detail, but where a broad encompassing vision of urban rejuvenation, spatial reconfiguration and social change underscored an approach that was integrated, pro-social, pro-poor and highly participatory, with far-reaching consequences for all residents, including children.

### 9.1 The Story of Medellin

Medellin, a Colombian city with around 2.5 million inhabitants, 90% of whom live in poor “barrios”, has long been associated with extreme poverty and inequality, political corruption, drug cartels, gangsterism and very high crime rates. But between 2001 and 2006, a transformation started taking place: the homicide rate was reduced from 184 to 26 per 100,000 adults, and both the Human Development and Quality of Life indices increased substantially. The city became safer, the local economy improved and there was renewed interest and investment in education and the cultural arts. All this seems to have been the consequence of innovative public policy and development strategies which did an about-turn from the usual approach, which is to respond to poverty and violence by closing things down and containing – “to increase security, make that security increasingly visible and forceful, and ensure that the places where the elite gather, live and work are comparatively safe. For many years, Medellin took that approach. It did not work. So they took a 180 degree turn and opened every up!” (Feek 2008)

Set in a deep valley, the city is surrounded by informal settlements which extend up the steep slopes on the periphery. “Medellin became an attraction for the migrant population due to promises of work, progress and expectations for better living conditions. As rural migrants arrived to the city ... they built their own houses reflecting their previous rural housing standards, made out of poor construction materials, hoping that they would be able to make improvements as they progressed in economic terms” (De Los Rios 2003). Shacks made of board and mud perch precariously on the surrounding mountain slopes, and for many it used to be an expensive and time-consuming journey to reach the inner city, via multiple bus trips on winding mountain passes. This has changed due to the city's investment in an improved public transport system, including the establishment of a metrocab – a cable car which soars over the city, linking the peripheral (low income) residential areas on the outer slopes to the inner city, while simultaneously reducing both the cost of transport (by about a third) and the time spent travelling (from two hours to 20 minutes). The metrocab is thought to be the only cable-car system in the world built for mass transit, rather than for tourism, and despite being built precisely to service the city's poorest residents, it appears to be “one of the world's best built, best maintained and ...cleanest of mass transport systems” (Carney 2005). The metrocab transports around 16,000 passengers a day – both locals and tourists – and the modernized, elevated metro rail system carries 300,000 people daily (Carney 2005). Described as being as modern, noiseless and efficient as any luxury ski resort cable-car, it passes directly over poor residential areas, while the spaces below have been made into walkways. Residents then started investing more into making their own homes, now visible to all, safer and more attractive (Feek 2008).

One of the themes underlying the transformation was connectivity. Pedestrian bridges were built across creeks and gorges which were sites of inter-community violence, so that instead of clamping down on warring areas that were geographically divided, the two sides were physically and symbolically linked. At the same time, there was an initiative to improve the quality of services to the poorest areas, and to transform historically dangerous places into attractive and well-populated spaces. “Open public spaces, transparent public process, and a culture of citizenship, high quality [services and social infrastructure] for all and striking symbolism” are at the core of the policies and interventions that have catalysed the transformation of Medellin (Feek 2008).

At least five library parks were built in the poorest and most violent areas. These combined places of learning and recreation – for both adults and children – with the emphasis being on making safe and aesthetically attractive spaces available for a range of uses. There was an emphasis on quality and good design – one of the library parks, situated in Moravia (one of the poorest barrios and renowned as having the worst violence) was designed by Colombia's most famous architect. Libraries not only house



thousands of books, but have hundreds of computer terminals with broadband access available to the public. The parks are places for people to gather informally or to meet and organize, for children to play, for cultural events – music, poetry, dance. And rather than being walled in, the parks are open, with multiple entry points. Similarly, the botanical garden, a place which had become dangerous to walk in, was revived and made safe. It was replanted with the best examples of local vegetation, the solid walls were replaced with a transparent fence, and a design competition was held to select architects to create the public space at the centre of the park – and won by a group of local architectural students. An excellent restaurant was established at the centre, which drew the elite into this public space.

Medellin's award-winning mayor Sergio Fajardo, explained to an audience at Cornell University that changing the way politics was done and targeting poor areas was essential to the success in turning the city around. They made extensive use of the Human Development Index to identify Medellin's most impoverished areas. "Instead of targeting the city's affluent areas to garner election votes, he targeted the poorest ones and pushed for projects to develop infrastructure" (Park 2009).

All these social investments have had other consequences: local businesses began to flourish and banks opened in areas that previously had none. The upgraded public transport system improved access to all parts of the city, cut transport costs, and decreased both traffic congestion and air pollution. Health facilities arrived in poor areas and education improved, partly as a result of deliberate investments in schools and educational resources, and undoubtedly influenced by the fact that there was more of a reading culture due to the establishment of the library parks. Before the arrival of the new metro transport system, there was a huge education campaign in schools to 'teach' children about 'metro-culture'. This was a deliberate strategy to ensure that by the time the upgraded transport system started operating, young users would feel pride and ownership in it, and be well versed in good public transport etiquette. This seems to have paid off – the metro transport system is renowned for being one of the cleanest anywhere, free of graffiti, litter and vandalism.

The funding and management mechanisms for achieving all of this are perhaps the most interesting part. First, the expense of such investments could have been prohibitive, but through a process of greater financial transparency and accountability, it was found that the city's budget was able to make significant investments in upgrading public infrastructure. Second, the city then adopted a "policy of public ownership of public services (water, electricity, sewerage and later, digital telecommunications) and demanded that those services be both efficient and profitable. EPM, the Medellin public utility company, is among the most efficient and profitable companies in Latin America. And it is owned by the residents of the city through the office of the Mayor. There is no

privatization here. Consequently, there is no expatriation of profits... Instead, a substantial share of the profits, over 100 million dollars per annum, are immediately returned as investments in the city” (Feek 2008). Third, the city was able to raise taxes. This was made possible by the trust that was built between local government and residents, and the fact that city was transparent about where the money went (Park 2009).

Another notable approach was that the process was, and seems to have remained, highly inclusive and participatory. The people of Medellin have been engaged in identifying, planning, budgeting implementing and monitoring development through a system of representatives who consult both with their communities and with the city. Participation includes some financial control: 7% of Medellin's core annual budget (70 million US dollars) is controlled by representatives of some of the poorest barrios, and the money is spent in the places where they live. This has ensured that good decisions are made about how to spend the budget, and improved accountability and civic involvement in regenerating the various parts of the city. While the mayor's office is central for overall policy development and management, it works with a network of community groups, co-operatives, business and local organizations.

Importantly, the process of urban development was allowed to evolve in organic ways: rather than being based on national or international models, it was a city-based process with no micro-plan of action, and a striking absence of ‘silos’ or sector-specific intervention. Increased policing was balanced with social reintegration of criminals, and more general strategies to improve public engagement and quality of life. “They did not set out to address violence specifically. They did set out to create more safe, open spaces expecting that those would have a significant effect across a range of related issues, including the levels of violence” (Feek 2008). This is about an integrated approach based around principals of transparency, openness, inclusion and engagement – both in process and in the physical creation of public space. The benefits are for everyone.

## 10 Conclusions

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Two streams of literature – on integrated development planning and on child-friendly cities – concur on the need for accurate data, disaggregated spatially (ideally to small area level) as well as by gender and age, in order to inform detailed assessments of social and environmental conditions, inform targeting of programmes and monitor development initiatives.

The child-centred literature points to the importance of engaging children in meaningful ways, so that they can articulate their own experiences and participate in assessing their own needs and in planning the development of the environments in which they live. There is a fairly large discourse from developed countries on qualitative and participatory research with children about their mobility, living conditions and surrounding environments, but relatively little from South Africa. Despite the repeated assertions that integrated planning must take into account the experience of children and that children's right to participation should be realized in settlement planning processes, there is relatively little literature that documents the process of using child-generated understandings to influence broader planning and development initiatives.

The literature emphasizes the need for appropriate time allocations, capacity and political will to engage with children and youth about public space, and also for developers and local governments to remain open and responsive to youth-initiated negotiations around public space. But the question that arises is how children and youth can engage in negotiations around more inclusive space strategies, as opposed to just the development of youth-specific spaces.

*“There are examples where youth-negotiated spaces have been successful in at least creating the opportunity for youth issues to be acknowledged and valued. But as an overall strategy, it still doesn't address the fundamental question of why public space can't implicitly accommodate alternative values and cultures, developed by social groups such as those of young people, in a natural and evolving manner.” (Malone 2002)*

Thus far, the literature on children's experience of their living environments appears to be contained within a specific child-centred literature, while mainstream development research focused on the built environment tends to exclude children. Public consultation and participation is widely acknowledged to be integral to the development plans and interventions. The Integrated Development Planning process in South Africa, for

example, explicitly requires both quantitative and qualitative research in the initial analysis phase (for instance, “the facts and figures that describe the demographic situation of the area and the people” and “broad qualitative analysis of people’s social and economic livelihood/survival strategies, vulnerabilities, strengths and opportunities, migration and movement patterns” (Department of Housing undated)) as well as public comment in the approval phase. There is an explicit requirement and intent to ensure that gender issues are reflected through the involvement of women in these processes, and yet evidence provided by Todes et al suggests that gender issues are overlooked in the analytical and planning processes. Until this happens in practice, and unless children are explicitly included and specified as an interest group in research and planning for development, the child-centred discourse will remain a separate and marginal discourse, making it difficult to integrate into plans and budgets for integrated development in the context of human settlements.

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